

CHAPTER TITLES FOR BOOK II

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BOOK II

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Prologue

Through certain symbolic signs we have in the foregoing way discussed instruction in ignorance as it regards the nature of the Absolute Maximum. Through [the assistance of] this Nature, which shines forth a bit to us in a shadow, let us by the same method inquire a bit more about those things which are all-that-which-they-are from the Absolute Maximum.

Since what is caused derives altogether from its cause and not at all from itself and since it conforms as closely (*propinquius et simil-*

Wherefore, ascend to [the recognition] that truth, freed from material [conditions], sees, as in a definition, the equality which we cannot at all experience in things, since in things equality is present only defectively.

93 Press onward: Conformably to the rule,⁴ there is no precision in music. Therefore., it is not the case that one thing [perfectly] harmonizes with another in weight or length or thickness. Nor is it possible to find between the different sounds of flutes, bells, human voices, and other instruments comparative relations which are precisely harmonic—so [precisely] that a more precise one could not be exhibited. Nor is there, in different instruments [of the same kind]—just as also not in different men—the same degree of true comparative relations; rather, in all things difference according to place, time, complexity, and other [considerations] is necessary. And so, precise comparative relation is seen only formally; and we cannot experience in perceptible objects a most agreeable, undefective harmony, because it is not present there. Ascend now to [the recognition] that the maximum, most precise harmony is an equality-of-comparative-relation which a living and bodily man cannot hear. For since [this harmony] is every proportion (*ratio*), it would attract to itself our soul's reason[*ratio*]—just as infinite Light [attracts] all light—so that the soul, freed from perceptible objects, would not without rapture hear with the intellect's ear this supremely concordant harmony. A certain immensely pleasant contemplation could here be engaged in—not only regarding the immortality of our intellectual, rational spirit (which harbors in its nature incorruptible reason, through which the mind attains, of itself, to the concordant and the discordant likeness in musical things). but also regarding the eternal joy into which the blessed are conducted, once they are freed from the things of this world. But [I will deal] with this [topic] elsewhere.⁵

94 Furthermore: If we apply our rule to arithmetic, we see that no two things can agree in number. And since with respect to a difference of number there is also a difference of composition, complexity, comparative relation, harmony, motion, and so on *ad infinitum*, we hereby recognize that we are ignorant.

No one [human being] is as another in any respect—neither in sensibility, nor imagination, nor intellect, nor in an activity (whether writing or painting or an art). Even if for a thousand years one [individual] strove to imitate another in any given respect, he would never at-

tain precision (though perceptible difference sometimes remains unperceived). Even art imitates nature as best it can; but it can never arrive at reproducing it precisely. Therefore, medicine as well as alchemy, magic, and other transmutational arts lacks true precision, although one art is truer in comparison with another (e.g., medicine is truer than the transmutational arts, as is self-evident).

95 Let me say, still making inferences from the same basis: Since with regard to opposites (e.g., with regard to the simple and the composite, the abstract and the concrete, the formal and the material, the corruptible and the incorruptible, etc.) we also find degrees of comparative greatness, we do not come to the pure oppositeness of the opposites—i.e., to that wherein they agree precisely and equally. Therefore, it is with a difference of degree that all things are from opposites; they have more from one [of the opposites] and less from the other, and they receive the nature of one of them through the triumph of one [of them] over the other. Wherefore, we pursue the knowledge of things rationally, so that we may know that in one thing composition is present in a certain simplicity and in another thing simplicity is present in composition, [that] in one thing corruptibility [is present] in incorruptibility and in another the reverse, and so on, as I shall expound in the book of *Conjectures*, where I will discuss this [matter] more fully.⁶ Let these few remarks suffice for showing the marvelous power of learned ignorance.

96 Descending more to the [present] topic, I say more fully: Since neither an ascent to the unqualifiedly Maximum nor a descent to the unqualifiedly Minimum is possible, and thus (as is evident regarding number and regarding the division of a continuum) no transition is made to the infinite:⁷ clearly, there must always be positable a greater and a lesser—whether in quantity or virtue or perfection, etc.—than any given finite thing, since the unqualifiedly Maximum or Minimum is not positable in [finite] things. But [this] progression does not continue unto the infinite,⁸ as was just indicated. Since each part of the infinite is infinite, a contradiction is implied [by the following]: that where we reach the infinite, there we find more and less. For just as more and less cannot befit the infinite, so [they cannot befit] something having any kind of comparative relation to the infinite, since, necessarily, this latter would also be infinite. For example, in the infinite number the number two would not be smaller than the number one hundred—if through ascending we could actually arrive at the in-

finite number.⁹ Similarly, an infinite line composed of an infinite number of lines of two feet would not be shorter than an infinite line composed of an infinite number of lines of four feet. And so, [by comparison] there is not positable anything which would limit the Divine Power. Therefore, the Divine Power can posit a greater and a lesser than any given thing, unless this given thing is also the Absolute Maximum—as will be demonstrated in the third book.¹⁰

97 Therefore, only the absolutely Maximum is negatively infinite. Hence, it alone is whatever there can at all possibly be. But since the universe encompasses all the things which are not God, it cannot be negatively infinite, although it is unbounded and thus privatively infinite. And in this respect it is neither finite nor infinite. For it cannot be greater than it is. This results from a defect. For its possibility, or matter, does not extend itself farther. For to say “The universe can always be actually greater” is not other than saying “Possible being passes over into actually infinite being.” But this latter [statement] cannot hold true, since infinite actuality—which is absolute eternity, which is *actually* all possibility of being—cannot arise from possibility.¹¹ Therefore, although with respect to God's infinite power, which is unlimitable, the universe could have been greater: nevertheless, since the possibility-of-being, or matter, which is not actually extendible unto infinity, opposes, the universe cannot be greater. And so, [the universe is] unbounded; for it is not the case that anything actually greater than it, in relation to which it would be bounded, is positable. And so, [it is] privatively infinite. Now, the universe exists actually only in a contracted manner, so that it exists in the best¹² way in which the condition of its nature allows. For it is the creation, which, necessarily, derives from Absolute and unqualifiedly Divine Being—as subsequently and by means of learned ignorance I will very briefly show, as clearly and simply as possible.

98 *Chapter Two: Created being derives from the being of the
First in a way that is not understandable.*

Sacred ignorance has already¹³ taught us that nothing exists from itself except the unqualifiedly Maximum (in which *from itself*, *in itself*, *through itself*, and *with respect to itself* are the same thing: viz., Absolute Being) and that, necessarily, every existing thing is that which it is, insofar as it is, from Absolute Being. For how could that which

is not from itself exist in any other way than from Eternal Being? But since the Maximum is far distant from any envy, it cannot impart diminished being as such. Therefore, a created thing, which is a derivative being, does not have everything which it is (e.g., [not] its corruptibility, divisibility, imperfection, difference, plurality, and the like) from the eternal, indivisible, most perfect, undifferentiated, and one Maximum—nor from any positive cause.

99 An infinite line is infinite straightness, which is the cause of all linear being. Now, with respect to being a line, a curved line is from the infinite line; but with respect to being curved, it is not from the infinite line. Rather, the curvature follows upon finitude, since a line is curved because it is not the maximum line. For if it were the maximum line, it would not be curved, as was shown previously.¹⁴ Similarly with things: since they cannot be the Maximum, it happens that they are diminished, other differentiated, and the like—none of which [characteristics] have a cause. Therefore, a created thing has from God the fact that it is one, distinct, and united to the universe; and the more it is one, the more like¹⁵ unto God it is. However, it does not have from God (nor from any positive cause but [only] contingently¹⁶) the fact that its oneness exists in plurality, its distinctness in confusion, and its union in discord.

100 Who, then, can understand created being by conjoining, in created being, the absolute necessity from which it derives and the contingency without which it does not exist? For it seems that the creation, which is neither God¹⁷ nor nothing, is, as it were, after God and before nothing and in between God and nothing—as one of the sages says: “God is the opposition to nothing by the mediation of being.”¹⁸ Nevertheless, [the creation] cannot be composed of being and not-being. Therefore, it seems neither to be (since it descends from being) nor not to be (since it is before nothing) nor to be a composite of being and nothing.

Now, our intellect, which cannot leap beyond contradictories,¹⁹ does not attain to the being of the creation either by means of division or of composition, although it knows that created being derives only from the being of the Maximum. Therefore, derived being is not understandable, because the Being from which [it derives] is not understandable—just as the adventitious being of an accident is not understandable if the substance to which it is adventitious is not understood.²⁰ And, therefore, the creation as creation cannot be called one,

because it descends from Oneness, nor [can it be called] many, since its being derives from the One; nor [can it be called] both one and many conjunctively. But its oneness exists contingently and with a certain plurality. Something similar, it seems, must be said about simplicity and composition and other opposites.

101 But since the creation was created through the being of the Maximum and since—in the Maximum—being, making, and creating are the same thing: creating seems to be not other than God's being all things. Therefore, if God is all things and if His being all things is creating: how can we deem the creation not to be eternal, since God's being is eternal—indeed, is eternity itself? Indeed, insofar as the creation is God's being no one doubts that it is eternity. Therefore, insofar as it is subject to time, it is not from God, who is eternal. Who, then, understands the creation's existing both eternally and temporally? For in²¹ Being itself the creation was not able not to exist eternally; nor was it able to exist before time, since “before” time there was no *before*.²² And so, the creation always existed, from the time it was able to exist.

102 Who, in fact, can understand that God is the Form of being and nevertheless is not mingled with the creation? For from an infinite line and a finite curved line there cannot arise a composite, which cannot exist without comparative relation; but no one doubts that there can be no comparative relation between the infinite and the finite.²³ How, then, can the intellect grasp the following?: that the being of a curved line is from an infinite straight line, though the infinite straight line does not inform the curved line as a form but rather as a cause and an essence. The curved line cannot participate in this essence either by taking a part of it (since the essence is infinite and indivisible) or as matter participates in form (e.g., as Socrates and Plato [participate] in humanity), or as a whole is participated in by its parts (e.g., as the universe [is participated in] by its parts), or as several mirrors [partake of] the same face in different ways (for it is not the case that as a mirror is a mirror before it receives the image of a face, so created being exists prior to derivative, [participating] being; for created being *is*¹⁰³

103 derivative being). Who is he, then, who can understand how it is that the one, infinite Form is participated in in different ways by different created things? For created being cannot be anything other than reflection—not a reflection received positively in some other thing but a reflection which is contingently different. Perhaps [a comparison

with an artifact is fitting]: if the artifact depended entirely upon the craftman's idea and did not have any other being than dependent being, the artifact would exist from the craftsman and would be conserved as a result of his influence—analogously to the image of a face in a mirror (with the proviso that before and after [the appearance of the image] the mirror be nothing in and of itself).

Nor can we understand how it is that God can be made manifest to us through visible creatures. For [God is] not [manifest] analogously to our intellect, which is known only to God and to ourselves and which, when it commences to think, receives from certain images in the memory a form of a color, a sound, or something else. Prior [to this reception] the intellect was without form, and subsequently thereafter it assumes another form—whether of signs, utterances, or letters—and manifests itself to others [besides itself and God]. Although God—whether in order to make His goodness known (as the religious maintain), or because of the fact that [He is] maximum, absolute Necessity, or for some other reason—created the world, which obeys Him (so that there are those who are compelled and who fear Him and whom He judges), it is evident that He neither assumes another form (since He is the Form of all forms) nor appears through positive signs (since these signs themselves, in regard to their own being, would likewise require other signs through which [to appear], and so on *ad infinitum*).

104 Who could understand the following?: how all things are the image of that one, infinite Form and are different contingently—as if a created thing were a god manqué, just as an accident is a substance manqué, and a woman is a man manqué.²⁴ For the Infinite Form is received only finitely, so that every created thing is, as it were, a finite infinity or a created god,²⁵ so that it exists in the way in which this can best occur.²⁶ [Everything is] as if the Creator had said, “Let it be made,” and as if because a God (who is eternity itself) could not be made, there was made that which could be made: viz., something as much like God as possible.²⁷ Wherefore, we infer that every created thing qua created thing is perfect—even if it seems less perfect in comparison with some other [created thing]. For the most gracious God imparts being to all things, in the manner in which being can be received. Therefore, since He imparts without difference and envy and since [what is imparted] is received in such way that contingency does not allow it to be received otherwise or to a greater degree: every created being finds satisfaction in its own perfection, which it has from the Divine Being freely. It does not desire to be, as something more

perfect, any other created thing.²⁸ Rather, it prefers that which it itself has, as a divine gift, from the Maximum; and it wishes for this [gift] to be incorruptibly perfected and preserved.

105 *Chapter Three:* In a way that cannot be understood the
Maximum enfolds and unfolds all things.

Nothing not enfolded in the first part [i.e., Book One] can be stated or thought about the ascertainable truth. For, necessarily, everything that agrees with what was there stated about the First Truth is true; the rest, which disagrees, is false. Now, in Book One we find it indicated²⁹ that there can be only one Maximum of all maxima. But the Maximum is that to which nothing can be opposed and in which even the Minimum is the Maximum.³⁰ Therefore, Infinite Oneness is the enfolding of all things. Oneness, which unites all things, bespeaks this [enfolding of all things]. Oneness is maximal not simply because it is the enfolding of number but because [it is the enfolding] of all things.³¹ And just as in number, which is the unfolding of oneness, we find only oneness, so in all existing things we find only the Maximum.

With respect to quantity, which is the unfolding of oneness, oneness is said to be a point. For in quantity only a point is present. Just as everywhere in a line—no matter where you divide it—there is a point, so [the same thing holds true] for a surface and a material object. And yet, there is not more than one point. This one point is not anything other than infinite oneness; for infinite oneness is a point which is the end, the perfection, and the totality of line and quantity, which it enfolds. The first unfolding of the point is the line, in which only the point is present.

106 In like manner, if you consider [the matter] carefully: rest is oneness which enfolds motion, and motion is rest ordered serially. Hence, motion is the unfolding of rest. In like manner, the present, or the now, enfolds time. The past was the present, and the future will become the present. Therefore, nothing except an ordered present is found in time. Hence, the past and the future are the unfolding of the present. The present is the enfolding of all present times; and the present times are the unfolding, serially, of the present; and in the present times only the present is found. Therefore, the present is one enfolding of all times. Indeed, the present is oneness. In like manner, identity is the

enfolding of difference; equality [the enfolding] of inequality; and simplicity [the enfolding] of divisions, or distinctions.

107 Therefore, there is one enfolding of all things. The enfolding of substance, the enfolding of quality or of quantity, and so on, are not distinct enfoldings. For there is only one Maximum, with which the Minimum coincides and in which enfolded³² difference is not opposed to enfolding identity. Just as oneness precedes otherness,³³ so also a point, which is a perfection, [precedes] magnitude. For what is perfect precedes whatever is imperfect. Thus, rest [precedes] motion, identity [precedes] difference, equality [precedes] inequality, and so on regarding the other perfections. These are convertible with Oneness, which is Eternity itself (for there cannot be a plurality of eternal things).³⁴ Therefore, God is the enfolding of all things in that all things are in Him; and He is the unfolding of all things in that He is in all things.

108 To explain my meaning by numerical examples: Number is the unfolding of oneness. Now, number bespeaks reasoning. But reasoning is from a mind. Therefore, the brutes, which do not have a mind, are unable to number.³⁵ Therefore, just as number arises from our mind by virtue of the fact that we understand what is commonly one as individually many: so the plurality of things [arises] from the Divine Mind (in which the many are present without plurality, because they are present in Enfolding Oneness). For in accordance with the fact that things cannot participate equally in the Equality of Being: God, in eternity, understood one thing in one way and another thing in another way. Herefrom arose plurality, which in God is oneness. Now, plurality or number does not have any other being than as comes from oneness. Therefore, oneness, without which number would not be number,³⁶ is present in the plurality. And, indeed, this [is what it] is for oneness to unfold all things: viz., for it to be present in the plurality.³⁷

109 However, the mode of enfolding and unfolding surpasses [the measure of] our mind. Who, I ask, could understand how it is that the plurality of things is from the Divine Mind? For God's understanding is His being; for God is Infinite Oneness. If you proceed with the numerical comparison by considering that number is the multiplication, by the mind, of the common one: it seems as if God, who is Oneness, were multiplied in things, since His understanding is His being.³⁸ And, yet, you understand that this Oneness, which is infinite and maximal,

cannot be multiplied. How, then, can you understand there to be a plurality whose being comes from the One without [there occurring] any multiplication of the One? That is, how can you understand there to be a multiplication of Oneness without there being a multiplication [of Oneness]? Surely, [you can] not [understand it] as [you understand the multiplication] of one species or of one genus in many species or many individuals; outside of these [individuals] a genus or a species
 110 does not exist except through an abstracting intellect.³⁹ Therefore, no one understands how God (whose oneness of being does not exist through the understanding's abstracting from things and does not exist as united to, or merged with, things) is unfolded through the number of things. If you consider things in their independence from God, they are nothing—even as number without oneness [is nothing]. If you consider God in His independence from things, He exists and the things are nothing. If you consider Him as He is in things, you consider things to be something in which He is. And in this regard you err, as was evident in the preceding chapter.⁴⁰ For it is not the case that the being of a thing is another thing, as a different thing is [another thing]; rather, its being is derivative being. If you consider a thing as it is in God, it *is* God and Oneness.

There remains only to say that the plurality of things arises from the fact that God is present in nothing. For take away God from the creation and nothing remains. Take away substance from a composite and no accident remains; and so, nothing remains. How can our intellect fathom this? For although an accident perishes when the substance is removed, an accident is not therefore nothing. However, the accident perishes because its being is adventitious being. And hence, a quantity, for example, exists only through the being of a substance; nevertheless, because quantity is present, the substance is quantitative by virtue of quantity. But [the relationship between God and the creation is] not similar. For the creation is not adventitious to God in a correspondingly similar manner; for it does not confer anything on God, as an accident [confers something] on a substance. Indeed, an accident confers [something] on a substance to such an extent that, as a result, the substance cannot exist without some accident, even though
 111 the accident derives its own being from the substance. But with God a similar thing cannot hold true. How, then, can we understand the creation qua creation?—[a creation] which is from God but which cannot as a result thereof contribute anything at all to Him, who is the greatest. And if qua creation it does not have even as much being as

an accident but is altogether nothing, how can we understand that the plurality of things is unfolded by virtue of the fact that God is present in nothing? For nothing [or not-being] is without any being. You might reply: "God's omnipotent will is the cause; His will and omnipotence are His being; for the whole of theology is circular."⁴¹ If so, then you will have to admit that you are thoroughly ignorant of how enfolding and unfolding occur and that you know only that you do not know the manner, even if you know (1) that God is the enfolding and the unfolding of all things, (2) that insofar as He is the enfolding, in Him all things are Himself, and (3) that insofar as He is the unfolding, in all things He is that which they are, just as in an image the reality itself (*veritas*) is present.⁴² [It is] as if a face were present in its own image, which, depending upon its repeatedness, is a close or a distant multiple of the face. (I do not mean according to spatial distance but according to a progressive difference from the real face, since [the image] cannot be repeated in any other way [than with a difference].) [It is as if] the one face—while remaining incomprehensibly above all the senses and every mind—were to appear differently and manifoldly in the different images multiplied from it.

112 *Chapter Four:* The universe, which is only a contracted maximum, is a likeness of the Absolute [Maximum].

If by careful consideration we extend what was previously manifested to us through learned ignorance: from the sole fact of our knowing that all things are either the Absolute Maximum or from the Absolute Maximum, many points can become clear to us regarding the world, or universe, which I affirm to be only a contracted maximum. Since what is contracted, or concrete, has from the Absolute whatever it is, that which is the [contracted] maximum imitates the maximally Absolute as much as it can. Therefore, [regarding] those things which in Book One were made known to us about the Absolute Maximum: as they befit the maximally Absolute absolutely,⁴³ so I affirm that they befit in a contracted way what is contracted.

113 Let me present some examples in order to prepare an inroad for one who is inquiring. God is Absolute Maximality and Oneness,, who precedes and unites absolutely different and separate things—i.e., contradictories—between which there is no middle ground. Absolute Maximality is, absolutely, that which all things are: in all things it is

the Absolute Beginning of things, the [Absolute] End of things, and the [Absolute] Being of things; in it⁴⁴ all things are—indistinctly, most simply, and without plurality—the Absolute Maximum, just as an infinite line is all figures.⁴⁵ So likewise the world, or universe,⁴⁶ is a contracted maximum and a contracted one. The world precedes contracted opposites—i.e., contraries. And it is, contractedly, that which all things are: in all things it is the contracted beginning of things, the contracted end of things, and the contracted being of things; it is a contracted infinity and thus is contractedly infinite; in it all things are—with contracted simplicity and contracted indistinction and without plurality⁴⁷—the contracted maximum, just as a contracted maximum line is contractedly all figures.

114 Hence, when one rightly considers contraction, the whole matter becomes clear. For contracted infinity, simplicity, or indistinction is, with regard to its contraction, infinitely lower than what is absolute, so that the infinite and eternal world⁴⁸ falls disproportionally short of Absolute Infinity and Absolute Eternity,⁴⁹ and [so that] the one [falls disproportionally short] of Oneness. Hence, Absolute Oneness is free of all plurality. But although contracted oneness (which is the one universe) is one maximum: since it is contracted, it is not free of plurality, even though it is only one contracted maximum. Therefore, although it is maximally one, its oneness is contracted through plurality, just as its infinity [is contracted] through finitude, its simplicity through composition, its eternity through succession, its necessity through possibility, and so on—as if Absolute Necessity communicated itself without any intermingling and yet necessity were contractedly restricted in something opposed to it. [For example, it is] as if whiteness had, in itself, absolute being apart from any abstracting on the part of our intellect, and as if what is white were contractedly white from whiteness; in this case whiteness would be restricted by non-whiteness in something actually white, so that that which would not be white without whiteness is white through whiteness.

115 From these [observations] an inquirer can infer many points. For example, just as God, since He is immense, is neither in the sun nor in the moon, although in them He is, absolutely, that which they are: so the universe is neither in the sun nor in the moon; but in them it is, contractedly, that which they are. Now, the Absolute Quiddity of the sun is not other than the Absolute Quiddity of the moon (since [this] is God Himself, who is the Absolute Being and Absolute Quiddity of

all things); but the contracted quiddity of the sun *is* other than the contracted quiddity of the moon (for as the Absolute Quiddity of a thing is not the thing, so the contracted [quiddity of a thing] is none other than the thing). Therefore, [the following] is clear: that since the universe is contracted quiddity, which is contracted in one way in the sun and in another way in the moon, the identity of the universe exists in difference, just as its oneness exists in plurality. Hence, although the universe is neither the sun nor the moon, nevertheless in the sun it is the sun and in the moon it is the moon. However, it is not the case that God is in the sun sun and in the moon moon;⁵⁰ rather, [in them] He is that which is sun and moon without plurality and difference. *Universe* bespeaks *universality*—i.e., a oneness of many things. Accordingly, just as humanity is neither Socrates nor Plato but in Socrates is Socrates and in Plato is Plato, so is the universe in relation to all things.

- 116 But since, as was said, the universe is only the contracted first,⁵¹ and in this respect is a maximum, it is evident that the whole universe sprang into existence by a simple emanation⁵² of the contracted maximum from the Absolute Maximum. But all the beings which are parts of the universe (and without which the universe, since it is contracted, could not be one and whole and perfect) sprang into existence together with the universe; [there was] not first an intelligence, then a noble soul, and then nature. as Avicenna⁵³ and other philosophers maintained. Nevertheless, just as in a craftsman's design the whole (e.g., a house) is prior to a part (e.g., a wall), so because all things sprang into existence from God's design, we say that first there appeared the universe and thereafter all things—without which there could not be either a universe or a perfect [universe]. Hence, just as the abstract is in the concrete, so we consider the Absolute Maximum to be antecedently in the contracted maximum, so that it is subsequently in all particulars because it is present absolutely in that which is contractedly all things [viz., in the universe]. For God is the Absolute Quiddity of the world, or universe. But the universe is contracted quiddity.⁵⁴ *Contraction* means contraction to [i.e., restriction by] something, so as to be this or that. Therefore, God, who is one, is in the one universe. But the universe is contractedly in all things. And so, we can understand the following: (1) how it is that God, who is most simple Oneness and exists in the one universe, is in all things as if subsequently and through the mediation of the universe, and (2) [how it is that as it] through the mediation of the one universe the plurality of things is in God.

117 *Chapter Five: Each thing in each thing.*

If you pay close attention to what has already been said, you will not have trouble seeing—perhaps more deeply than Anaxagoras—the basis of the Anaxagorean truth “Each thing is in each thing.”⁵⁵ From Book One it is evident that God is in all things in such way that all things are in Him;⁵⁶ and it is now evident [from II, 4] that God is in all things through the mediation of the universe, as it were. Hence, it is evident that all is in all and each in each. For the universe, as being most perfect, preceded all things “in the order of nature,” as it were, so that in each thing it could be each thing. For in each created thing the universe is this created thing; and each thing receives all things in such way that in a given thing all things are, contractedly, this thing. Since each thing is contracted, it is not the case that it can be actually all things; hence, it contracts all things, so that [in it] they are it. Therefore, if all things are in all things, all things seem to precede each given thing. Therefore, it is not the case that all things are many things, since it is not the case that plurality precedes each given thing. Hence, in the “order of nature,” [as it were] all things preceded, without plurality, each thing. Therefore, it is not the case that many things are in each thing actually; rather, [in each thing] all things are, without plurality, this respective thing.

118 Now, the universe is in things only contractedly; and every actually existing thing contracts all things, so that they are, actually, that which it is. But everything which exists actually, exists in God, since He is the actuality of all things. Now, actuality is the perfection and the end of possibility. Hence, since the universe is contracted in each actually existing thing: it is evident that God, who is in the universe, is in each thing and that each actually existing thing is immediately in God, as is also the universe.⁵⁷ Therefore, to say that each thing is in each thing is not other than [to say] that through all things God is in all things and that through all things all things are in God.⁵⁸ The following very deep [truths] are apprehended clearly by an acute intellect: that God is, without difference, in all things because each thing is in each thing and that all things are in God because all things are in all things. But since the universe is in each thing in such way that each thing is in it: in each thing the universe is, contractedly, that which this thing is contractedly; and in the universe each thing is the universe; nonetheless, the universe is in each thing in one way, and each thing is in the universe in another way.

- 119 Consider an example: It is evident that an infinite line is a line, a triangle, a circle, and a sphere.⁵⁹ Now, every finite line has its being from the infinite line, which is all that which the finite line is.⁶⁰ Therefore, in the finite line all that which the infinite line is—viz., line, triangle, and the others—is that which the finite line is. Therefore, in the finite line every figure is the finite line. In the finite line there is not actually either a triangle, a circle, or a sphere; for from what is actually many, there is not made what is actually one. For it is not the case that each thing is in each thing actually; rather, in the line the triangle is the line; and in the line the circle is the line; and so on. In order that you may see more clearly: A line cannot exist actually except in a material object, as will be shown elsewhere.⁶¹ Now, no one doubts that all figures are enfolded in a material object, which has length, width, and depth. Therefore, in an actually existing line all figures are actually the line; and in [an actually existing] triangle [all figures are] the triangle; and so on. In a stone all things are stone; in a vegetative soul, vegetative soul; in life, life; in the senses, the senses; in sight, sight; in hearing, hearing; in imagination, imagination; in reason, reason; in intellect, intellect;⁶² in God, God. See, then, how it is that the oneness of things, or the universe, exists in plurality and, conversely, the plurality [of things] exists in oneness.
- 120 Consider more closely and you will see that each actually existing thing is tranquil because of the fact that in it all things *are* it and that in God it is God. You see that there is a marvelous oneness of things, an admirable equality, and a most wonderful union,⁶³ so that all things are in all things. You also understand that for this reason there arises a difference and a union of things. For it is not the case that each thing was able to be actually all things (for each would have been God, and consequently all things would [actually] exist in each thing in the way in which they would be possible to exist conformably with that which each thing is); and, as was evident above,⁶⁴ [it is] not [the case that] each thing was able to be altogether like the other. This, then, caused all things to exist in different degrees, just as it also caused that being which was unable to exist incorruptibly at once, to exist incorruptibly⁶⁵ in temporal succession, so that all things are that which they are because they were not able to exist in any other way or any better way.⁶⁶ Therefore, in each thing all things are tranquil, since one degree could not exist without another—just as with the members of a body each contributes [something] to the other, and all are content in all. For since the eye cannot actually be
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the hands, the feet, and all the other members, it is content with being the eye; and the foot [is content with being] the foot.⁶⁷ And all members contribute [something] to one another, so that each is that which it is in the best way it can be. Neither the hand nor the foot is in the eye; but in the eye they are the eye insofar as the eye is immediately in the man. And in like manner, in the foot all the members [are the foot] insofar as the foot is immediately in the man. Thus, each member through each member is immediately in the man; and the man, or the whole, is in each member through each member, just as in the parts the whole is in each part through each part.

122 Therefore, suppose you consider humanity as if it were something absolute, unmixable, and incontractible-, and [suppose you] consider a man in whom absolute humanity exists absolutely and from which humanity⁶⁸ there exists the contracted humanity which the man is. In that case, the absolute humanity is, as it were, God; and the contracted humanity is, as it were, the universe. The absolute humanity is in the man principally, or antecedently, and is in each member or each part subsequently; and the contracted humanity is in the eye eye, in the heart heart, etc., and so, in each member is contractedly each member. Thus, in accordance with this supposition, we have found (1) a likeness of God and the world, and (2) guidance with respect to all the points touched upon in these two chapters, together with (3) many other points which follow from this [comparison].

123 *Chapter Six: The enfolding, and the degrees of contraction, of the universe.*

In the foregoing we found, beyond all understanding, that the world, or universe, is one. Its oneness is contracted by plurality, so that it is oneness in plurality. And because Absolute Oneness is first and the oneness of the universe is derived from it, the oneness of the universe will be a second oneness, consisting of a plurality. And since (as I will show in *Conjectures*)⁶⁹ the second oneness is tenfold and unites the ten categories, the one universe will, by a tenfold contraction, be the unfolding of the first, absolute, and simple Oneness. Now, all things are enfolded in the number ten, since there is not a number above it.⁷⁰ Therefore, the tenfold oneness of the universe enfolds the plurality of all contracted things. As ten is the square root of one hundred and the cube root of one thousand, so—because the oneness of the universe is in all things as the contracted beginning of all—the

oneness of the universe is the root of all things. From this root there first arises the “square number,” so to speak, as a third oneness; and the cubic number [arises thereafter] as a fourth and final oneness. The first unfolding of the oneness of the universe is the third oneness, viz., one hundred; and the last unfolding is the fourth oneness, viz., one thousand.

- 124 And so, we find three universal onenesses descending by degrees to what is particular, in which they are contracted, so that they are actually the particular. The first and absolute Oneness enfolds all things absolutely; the first contracted [oneness enfolds] all things contractedly. But order requires [the following]: that Absolute Oneness be seen to enfold, as it were, the first contracted [oneness], so that by means of it [it enfolds] all other things; that the first contracted [oneness] be seen to enfold the second contracted [oneness] and, by means of it, the third contracted [oneness]; and that the second contracted [oneness be seen to enfold] the third contracted oneness, which is the last universal oneness, fourth from the first, so that by means of the third contracted oneness the second oneness arrives at what is particular. And so, we see that the universe is contracted in each particular through three grades. Therefore, the universe is, as it were, all of the ten categories [*generalissima*], then the genera, and then the species. And so, these are universal according to their respective degrees; they exist with degrees and prior, by a certain order of nature, to the thing which actually contracts them. And since the universe is contracted, it is not found except as unfolded in genera; and genera are found only in species.⁷¹ But individuals exist actually; in them all things exist contractedly.
- 125 Through these considerations we see that universals exist actually only in a contracted manner. And in this way the Peripatetics speak the truth [when they say that] universals do not actually exist independently of things. For only what is particular exists actually. In the particular, universals are contractedly the particular. Nevertheless, in the order of nature universals have a certain universal being which is contractible by what is particular. [I do] not [mean] that before contraction they exist actually and in some way other than according to the natural order ([i.e., other than] as a contractible universal which exists not in itself but in that which is actual, just as a point, a line, and a surface precede, in progressive order, the material object in which alone they exist actually). For because the universe exists actually only in a contracted way, so too do all universals. Although universals do not exist as actual apart from particulars, nevertheless they

are not mere rational entities.⁷² (By comparison, although neither a line nor a surface exists apart from a material object, they are not on this account mere rational entities; for they exist in material objects, even as universals exist in particulars.) Nevertheless, by [the process of] abstracting, the intellect makes them exist independently of things. To be sure, the abstraction is a rational entity, since absolute being cannot befit universals. For the altogether absolute universal is God.

126 We shall see in the book *Conjectures* how it is that the universal is in the intellect as a result of the [process of] abstracting.⁷³ Yet, this point can be clearly enough seen from the preceding, since in the intellect the universal is only the intellect; and so, it is present there intellectually and contractedly. Since the intellect's understanding is both loftier and more illustrious being, it apprehends, both in itself and in other things, the contraction of universals. For example, dogs and the other animals of the same species are united by virtue of the common specific nature which is in them. This nature would be contracted in them even if Plato's intellect had not, from a comparison of likenesses, formed for itself a species. Therefore, with respect to its own operation, understanding follows being and living; for [merely] through its own operation understanding can bestow neither being nor living nor understanding. Now, with respect to the things understood: the intellect's understanding follows, through a likeness, being and living and the intelligibility of nature. Therefore, universals, which it makes from comparison, are a likeness of the universals contracted in things. Universals exist contractedly in the intellect before the intellect unfolds them by outward signs for them—unfolds them through understanding, which is its operation. For it can understand nothing which is not already contractedly in it as it. Therefore, in understanding, it unfolds, by resembling signs and characters, a certain resembling world, which is contracted in it.

I have here said enough about the oneness of the universe and about its contraction in things. Let me add some points about its trinity.

127 *Chapter Seven: The trinity of the universe.*

Absolute Oneness is necessarily trine—not contractedly but absolutely; for Absolute Oneness is not other than Trinity, which we grasp more readily by means of a certain mutual relationship. (I discussed

this point adequately in Book One.)⁷⁴ Similarly, just as maximum contracted oneness is oneness, so it is trine—not absolutely, so that the trinity is oneness, but contractedly, so that the oneness exists only in trinity, as a whole exists contractedly in its parts. In God it is not the case that Oneness exists contractedly in Trinity as a whole exists [contractedly] in its parts or as a universal exists [contractedly] in particulars; rather, the Oneness is the Trinity. Therefore, each of the persons [of the Trinity] is the Oneness; and since the Oneness is Trinity, one person is not another person. But in the case of the universe a similar thing cannot hold true. Therefore, [in the case of the universe] the three mutual relationships—which in God are called persons—have actual existence only collectively in oneness.

128 We must consider the foregoing points carefully. For in God the perfection of Oneness, which is Trinity, is so great that the Father is actually God, the Son actually God, and the Holy Spirit actually God, the Son and the Holy Spirit are actually in the Father, the Son and the Father [are actually] in the Holy Spirit, and the Father and the Holy Spirit [are actually] in the Son. But in the case of what is contracted, a similar thing cannot hold true; for the mutual relationships exist *per se* only conjointly. Therefore, it cannot be the case that each distinct relationship is the universe; rather, all the mutual relationships [are] collectively [the universe]. Nor is the one [of them] actually in the others; rather, they are most perfectly contracted to one another (in the way in which the condition of contraction permits this), so that from them there is one universe,⁷⁵ which could not be one without that trinity. For there cannot be contraction without (1) that which is contractible, (2) that which causes contracting, and (3) the union which is effected through the common actuality of these two.

But contractibility bespeaks a certain possibility; and this [possibility] is descendant from the Begetting Oneness in God, Just as otherness [is descendant] from Oneness.⁷⁶ For [contracted possibility]⁷⁷ bespeaks mutability and otherness,⁷⁸ since [it speaks] with regard to a beginning.⁷⁹ For not anything it seems, precedes possibility. For how would anything exist if it had not been possible to exist? Therefore, possibility is descendant from Eternal Oneness.

129 But since that which causes contracting delimits the possibility of that which is contractible, it descends from Equality of Oneness. For Equality of Oneness is Equality of Being. For *being* and *one* are convertible. Hence, since that which causes contracting equalizes the pos-

sibility for being one thing or another contractedly, it is rightly said to descend from Equality-of-Being, which, in God, is the Word. And since the Word, which is the Essence (*ratio*) and Idea and Absolute Necessity of things, necessitates and restricts the possibility through such a cause of contracting, some [thinkers] called that which causes contracting “form” or “the world-soul” (and they called possibility “matter”); others [spoke of it as] “fate substantified”; others, e.g., the Platonists, [spoke of it as] a “connecting necessity.” For it descends from Absolute Necessity, so that it is a contracted necessity and contracted form, as it were, in which all forms truly exist. This [topic] will be discussed later.⁸⁰

130 Next, there is the union of what is contractible and what causes contracting—i.e., [the union] of matter and form, or of possibility and connecting necessity. This union is actually effected as if by a spirit of love—[a love] which unites the two by means of a certain motion. Certain individuals were accustomed to call this union “determined possibility.” For the possibility-to-be is determined toward actually being this or that—[determined] by means of the union of the determining form and the determinable matter. But, clearly, this union descends from the Holy Spirit, who is Infinite Union.

Therefore, the oneness of the universe is three, since it is from possibility, connecting necessity, and union—which can be called possibility, actuality, and union.⁸¹ And herefrom infer four universal modes of being. There is the mode of being which is called Absolute Necessity, according as God is Form of forms, Being of beings, and Essence (*ratio*) or Quiddity of things. With regard to this mode of being: in God all things are Absolute Necessity itself. Another mode [of being] is according as things exist in the connecting necessity; in this necessity, just as in a mind, the forms-of-things, true in themselves, exist with a distinction, and an order, of nature. We shall see later whether this is so.⁸² Another mode of being is according as, in determined possibility, things are actually this or that. And the lowest mode of being is according as things are possible to be, and it is absolute possibility.⁸³

131 The last three modes of being exist in one universality which is a contracted maximum.⁸⁴ From these there is one universal mode of being, since without them not anything can exist. I say *modes of being*. For the universal mode of being is not composed of the three things as parts in the way that a house [is composed] of a roof, a founda-

tion, and a wall. Rather it is from *modes of being*. For a rose which in a rose-garden is in potency in winter and in actuality in the summer has passed from a mode of possible being to something actually determined. Hence, we see that the mode of being of possibility, the mode of being of necessity, and the mode of being of actual determination are distinct. From them there is one universal mode of being, since without them there is nothing; nor does the one mode actually exist without the other.

132 *Chapter Eight: The possibility, or matter, of the universe.*

To expound here, at least briefly, upon the things which can make our ignorance learned, let me discuss for a moment the previously mentioned three modes of being—beginning with possibility. The ancients made many statements about possibility; the opinion of them all was that from nothing nothing is made. And so, they maintained that there is a certain absolute possibility of being all things and that it is eternal. They believed that in absolute possibility all things are enfolded as possibilities. They conceived this [absolute] matter, or possibility, by reasoning in a reverse way, just as in the case of absolute necessity. For example, they conceived a body incorporeally by abstracting from it the form of corporeity. And so, they attained unto matter only ignorantly. For how can a body be conceived incorporeally and without form? They said that by nature possibility precedes everything, so that the statement “God exists” is never true without the statement “Absolute possibility exists” also being true. Nevertheless, they did not maintain that absolute possibility is co-eternal with God, since it is from God. Absolute possibility is neither something nor nothing, neither one nor many, neither this nor that, neither quidditive nor qualitative; rather, it is the possibility for all things and is, actually, nothing of all things.

133 The Platonists called absolute possibility “lack,” since it lacks all form. Because it lacks, it desires. And by virtue of the following fact it is aptitude: viz., it obeys necessity, which commands it (i.e., draws it toward actually being), just as wax [obeys] the craftsman who wills to make something from it. But formlessness proceeds from, and unites, lack and aptitude—so that absolute possibility is, as it were, *incompositely* trine. For lack, aptitude, and formlessness cannot be its *parts*; for if they were, something would precede⁸⁵ absolute possibility—which is impossible. Hence, [lack, aptitude, and formlessness] are

modes in whose absence absolute possibility would not be absolute. For lack exists contingently in possibility. For from the fact that possibility does not have the form it can have, it is said to be lacking. Hence, it is lack. But formlessness is the “form” (so to speak) of possibility, which, as the Platonists maintained, is the “matter” (so to speak) of forms. For the world-soul is united to matter in accordance with formlessness, which they called “the basic power of life,” so that when the world-soul is mingled with possibility, the formless power of life is actually brought to the life-giving soul—brought (a) from a motion descending from the world-soul and (b) from the changeableness of possibility, or of power-of-life. Hence, they maintained that formlessness is the matter (so to speak) of forms—which matter is informed through sensitive, rational, and intellectual [form], so that it exists actually.

134 Hence, Hermes⁸⁶ said that *hyle* is the nourisher of bodies and that that formlessness is the nourisher of souls. And someone among us said that chaos naturally preceded the world and was the possibility of things—in which chaos that formless power resided, and in which power all souls exist as possibilities. Hence, the ancient Stoics said that all forms are actually in possibility but are hidden and appear as a result of a removal of the covering—just as when a spoon is made from wood only by the removal of portions [of the wood].⁸⁷

135 However, the Peripatetics said that forms are in matter only as possibilities and are educed by an efficient cause. Hence, it is quite true that forms exist not only from possibility but also through an efficient cause. (For example, he who removes portions of a piece of wood, in order that a statue be made from it, adds with respect to form.) This is obvious. For the fact that from stone a chest cannot be made by a craftsman is a defect in the material. But the fact that someone other than the craftsman cannot make a chest from wood is a defect in the agent. Therefore, both matter and an efficient cause are required. Hence, in a certain way, forms are in matter as possibilities, and they are brought to actuality in conformity with an efficient cause. Thus, [the Peripatetics] said that the totality of things is present, as possibility, in absolute possibility. Absolute possibility is boundless and infinite because of its lack of form and because of its aptitude for all forms—just as the possibility of shaping wax into the figure of a lion or a hare or whatever else, is boundless. Now, this infinity contrasts with the infinity of God because it is due to a lack,

whereas [the infinity] of God is due to an abundance, since in God all things are actually God. Thus, the infinity of matter is privative, [but the infinity] of God is negative. This is the position of those who have spoken about absolute possibility.

- 136** Through learned ignorance we find that it would be impossible for absolute possibility to *exist*. For since among things possible nothing can be less than absolute possibility, which is nearest to not-being (even according to the position of [earlier] writers), we would arrive at a minimum and a maximum with respect to things admitting of greater and lesser degrees; and this is impossible. Therefore, in God absolute possibility is God, but it is not possible outside Him. For we cannot posit anything which exists with absolute potency since everything except for the First is, necessarily, contracted.⁸⁸ For if the different things in the world are found to be so related that more can be from the one than from the other, we do not arrive at the unqualifiedly and absolutely Maximum and Minimum. And because they *are* found to be [such], absolute possibility is obviously
- 137** not positable. Therefore, every possibility is contracted. But it is contracted through actuality. Therefore, pure possibility—altogether undetermined by any actuality—is not to be found. Nor can the aptitude of the possibility be infinite and absolute, devoid of all contraction. For since God is Infinite Actuality, He is the cause only of actuality.⁸⁹ But the possibility of being exists contingently. Therefore, if the possibility were absolute, on what would it be contingent? Now, the possibility results from the fact that being [which derives] from the First cannot be completely, unqualifiedly, and absolutely actuality. Therefore, the actuality is contracted through the possibility, so that it does not at all exist except in the possibility. And the possibility does not at all exist unless it is contracted through the actuality. But there are differences and degrees, so that one thing is more actual, another more potential—without our coming to the unqualifiedly Maximum and Minimum. For maximum and minimum actuality coincide with maximum and minimum possibility and are the aforesaid absolutely Maximum, as was shown in Book One.⁹⁰
- 138** Furthermore, unless the possibility of things were contracted, there could not be a reason for things but everything would happen by chance, as Epicurus falsely maintained. That this world sprang forth rationally from possibility was necessarily due to the fact that the possibility had an aptitude only for being this world. Therefore, the pos-

sibility's aptitude was contracted and not absolute. The same holds true regarding the earth, the sun, and other things: unless they had been latently present in matter—[present] in terms of a certain contracted possibility—there would have been no more reason why they would have been brought forth into actuality than not.

- 139 Hence, although God is infinite and therefore had the power to create the world as infinite, nevertheless because the possibility was, necessarily, contracted and was not at all absolute or infinite aptitude, the world—in accordance with the possibility of being—was not able to be actually infinite or greater or to exist in any other way [than it does]. Now, the contraction of possibility is from actuality; but the actuality is from Maximum Actuality. Therefore, since the contraction of possibility is from God and the contraction of actuality is the result of contingency, the world—which, necessarily, is contracted—is contingently finite. Hence, from a knowledge of possibility we see how it is that contracted maximality comes from possibility which, of necessity, is contracted. This contraction [of possibility] does not result from contingency, because it occurs through actuality. And so, the universe has a rational and necessary cause of its contraction, so that the world, which is only contracted being, is not contingently from
- 140 God, who is Absolute Maximality. This [point] must be considered more in detail. Accordingly, since Absolute Possibility is God: if we consider the world as it is in Absolute Possibility, it is as [it is] in God and is Eternity itself.⁹¹ If we consider [the world] as it is in contracted possibility, then possibility, by nature, precedes only the world; and this contracted possibility is neither eternity nor co-eternal with God; rather, it falls short of eternity, as what is contracted [falls short] of what is absolute—the two being infinitely different.

What is said about potency or possibility or matter needs to be qualified, in the foregoing manner, according to the rules of learned ignorance. How it is that possibility proceeds by steps to actuality, I leave to be dealt with in the book *Conjectures*.⁹²

- 141 *Chapter Nine: The soul, or form, of the universe.*

All the wise agree that possible being cannot come to be actual except through actual being; for nothing can bring itself into actual being, lest it be the cause of itself; for it would be before it was.⁹³ Hence, they said that that which actualizes possibility does so intentionally, so that the possibility comes to be actual by rational ordina-

142 tion and not by chance. Some called this excellent [actualizing] nature “mind”; others called it “Intelligence,” others “world-soul,” others “fate substantified,” others (e.g., the Platonists) “connecting necessity.” The Platonists thought that possibility is necessarily determined through this necessity, so that possibility now actually is that which it was beforehand able to be by nature. For they said that in this mind the forms of things exist actually and intelligibly, just as in matter they exist as possibilities. And [they maintained] that the connecting necessity—which contains in itself the truth of the forms, together with [the truth of] the things which accompany the forms moves the heavens in accordance with the order of nature, so that by the medium of motion as an instrument [the connecting necessity] brings possibility into actuality and, as conformably as can be, into congruence with the intelligible concept of truth. The Platonists conceded that form as it is in matter—through this activity of the [world]-mind and by the medium of motion—is the image of true intelligible form and so is not true form but a likeness. Thus, the Platonists said that the true forms are in the world-soul prior—not temporally but naturally—to their presence in things. The Peripatetics do not grant this [point], for they maintain that forms do not have any other existence than in matter and (as a result of abstracting) in the intellect. (Obviously, the abstraction is subsequent to the thing.)

143 However, [the following view] was acceptable to the Platonists: that such a distinct plurality of exemplars in the connecting necessity is—in a natural order—from one infinite Essence, in which all things are one. Nevertheless, they did not believe that the exemplars were created by this [one infinite Essence] but that they descended from it in such way that the statement “God exists” is never true without the, statement “The world-soul exists” also being true. And they affirmed that the world-soul is the unfolding of the Divine Mind, so that all things—which in God are one Exemplar—are, in the world-soul, many distinct [exemplars]. They added that God naturally precedes this connecting necessity, that the world-soul naturally precedes motion, and that motion qua instrument [precedes] the temporal unfolding of things, so that those things which exist truly in the [world]-soul and exist in matter as possibilities are temporally unfolded through motion. This temporal unfolding follows the natural order which is in the world-soul and which is called “fate substantified.” And the temporal unfolding of substantified fate is a fate (as it is called by many) which descends actually and causally from that [substantified fate].⁹⁴

- 144 And so, the mode-of-being that is in the world-soul is [the mode] in accordance with which we say that the world is intelligible. The mode of actual being—which results from the actual determination of possibility by way of unfolding—is, as was said, the mode of being according to which the world is perceptible, in the opinion of the Platonists. They did not claim that forms as they exist in matter are other than forms which exist in the world-soul but [claimed] only that forms exist according to different modes of being: in the world-soul [they exist] truly and in themselves; in matter [they exist] not in their purity but in concealment—as likenesses. [The Platonists] added that the truth of forms is attained only through the intellect; through reason, imagination, and sense, nothing but images [are attained], according as the forms are mixed with possibility. And [they maintained] that therefore they did not attain to anything truly but [only] as a matter of opinion.
- 145 The Platonists thought that all motion derives from this world-soul, which they said to be present as a whole in the whole world and as a whole in each part of the world. Nevertheless, it does not exercise the same powers in all parts [of the world]—just as in man the rational soul does not operate in the same way in the hair and in the heart, although it is present as a whole in the whole [man] and in each part. Hence, the Platonists claimed that in the world-soul all souls—whether in bodies or outside [of bodies]—are enfolded. For they asserted that the world-soul is spread throughout the entire universe—[spread] not through parts (because it is simple and indivisible) but as a whole in the earth, where it holds the earth together, as a whole in stone, where it effects the steadfastness of the stone's parts, as a whole in water, as a whole in trees, and so on for each thing. The world-soul is the first circular unfolding (the Divine Mind being the center point, as it were, and the world-soul being the circle which unfolds the center) and is the natural enfolding of the whole temporal order of things. Therefore, because of the world-soul's distinctness and order, the Platonists called it “self-moving number” and asserted that it is from sameness and difference. They also thought that the world-soul differs from the human soul only in number, so that just as the human soul is to man so the world-soul is to the universe. [Moreover,] they believed that all souls are from the world-soul and that ultimately they are resolved into it, provided their moral failures do not prevent this.

146 Many Christians consented to this Platonistic approach. Especially since the essence of stone is distinct from the essence of man and in God there is neither differentiation nor otherness, they thought it necessary that these distinct essences (in accordance with which, things are distinct) be subsequent to God but prior to things (for the essence precedes the thing); and [they thought] this [too] with regard to intelligence, the mistress of the orbits. Furthermore, [they believed] that such distinct essences as these are the indestructible notions-of-things in the world-soul. Indeed, they maintained—though they admit that it is difficult to say and think—that the world-soul consists of all the notions of all things, so that in it all notions are its substance. [These Christians] support their view by the authority of divine Scripture: “God said ‘Let there be light,’ and light was made.” If the truth of light had not been naturally antecedent, what sense would it have made for Him to say “Let there be light”? And if the truth of light had not been antecedent, then after the light was temporally unfolded, why would it have been called light rather than something else? Such [Christians] adduce many similar considerations to support this view.

147 The Peripatetics, although admitting that the work of nature is the work of intelligence, do not admit that there are exemplars. I think that they are surely wrong—unless by “intelligence” they mean *God*. For if there is no notion within the intelligence, how does the intelligence purposefully cause motion? [On the other hand,] if there *is* a notion of the thing-to-be-unfolded-temporally (this notion would be the essence of motion),⁹⁵ then such [a notion] could not have been abstracted from a thing which does not yet exist temporally. Therefore, if there exists a notion which has not been abstracted, surely it is the notion about which the Platonists speak—[a notion] which is not [derived] from things but [is such that] things accord with it. Hence, the Platonists did not affirm that such essences of things are something distinct and different from the intelligence; rather, [they said] that such distinct [essences] jointly constitute a certain simple intelligence which enfolds in itself all essences. Hence, although the essence of man is not the essence of stone but the two are different essences, the humanity from which man derives (as white derives from whiteness) has no other being than—in intelligence—intelligibly and according to the nature of intelligence and—in reality—really.⁹⁶ [This does] not [mean] that there is the humanity of Plato and another separate humanity. Rather, according to different modes of being the same humanity ex-

ists naturally in the intelligence *before* existing in matter—not temporally before but in the sense that the essence naturally precedes the thing.

148 The Platonists spoke quite keenly and sensibly, being reproached, unreasonably, perhaps, by Aristotle, who endeavored to refute them with a covering of words rather than with deep discernment. But through learned ignorance I shall ascertain what the truer [view] is. I have [already] indicated⁹⁷ that we do not attain to the unqualifiedly Maximum and that, likewise, absolute possibility or absolute form (I.e., [absolute] actuality) which is not God cannot exist. And [I indicated] that no being except God is uncontracted⁹⁸ and that there is only one Form of forms and Truth of truths⁹⁹ and that the maximum truth of the circle is not other than that of the quadrangle.¹⁰⁰ Hence, the forms of things are not distinct except as they exist contractedly; as they exist absolutely they are one, indistinct [Form], which is the Word in God.¹⁰¹ It follows that [a Platonistic-type] world-soul would exist only in conjunction with possibility, through which it would be contracted.¹⁰² Nor would it be the case that *qua* mind it is either separated or separable from things; for if we consider mind according as it is separated from possibility, it is the Divine Mind, which alone is completely actual. Therefore, there cannot be many distinct exemplars, for each exemplar would be maximum and most true with respect to the things which are its exemplifications. But it is not possible that there be many maximal and most true things. For only one infinite Exemplar is sufficient and necessary; in it all things exist, as the ordered exists in the order. [This Exemplar] very congruently enfolds all the essences of things, regardless of how different they are, so that Infinite Essence is the most true Essence of the circle and is not greater or lesser or different or other [than the circle]. And Infinite Essence is the Essence of the quadrangle and is not greater or lesser or different [than the quadrangle]. The same holds true for other things, as we can discern from the example of an infinite line.¹⁰³

149 Seeing the differences of things, we marvel that the one most simple Essence of all things is also the different essence of each thing. Yet, we know that this must be the case; [we know it] from learned ignorance, which shows that in God difference is identity. For in seeing that the difference of the essences of all things exists most truly, we apprehend—since it is most true [that this difference exists most truly]—the one most true Essence-of-all-things, which is Maximum

Truth. Therefore, when it is said that God created man by means of one essence and created stone by means of another, this is true with respect to things but not true with respect to the Creator—just as we see with regard to numbers. The number three is a most simple essence, which does not admit of more or less. In itself it is one essence; but as it is related to different things, it is, in accordance therewith, different essences. For example, in a triangle there is one essence of the number three for the three angles; in a substance there is another essence [of the number three] for the matter, the form, and their union; there is another essence [of the number three] for a father, a mother, and their offspring—or for three human beings or three asses. Hence, the connecting necessity is not, as the Platonists maintained, a mind which is inferior to the Begetting Mind; rather, it is the divine Word and Son, equal with the Father. And it is called “Logos” or “Essence,” since it is the Essence of all things. Therefore, that which the Platonists said about the images of forms is of no account; for there is only one infinite Form of forms, of which all forms are images, as I stated earlier¹⁰⁴ at a certain point.

150 Therefore, it is necessary to understand clearly the following matters: since [a Platonistic-type] world-soul must be regarded as a certain universal form which enfolds in itself all forms¹⁰⁵ but which has actual existence only contractedly in things and which in each thing is the contracted form of this thing, as was said earlier¹⁰⁶ regarding the universe: then [not such a world-soul but] God—who in one Word creates all things, regardless of how different from one another they are—is the efficient, the formal, and the final Cause of all things; and there can be no created thing which is not diminished from contraction and does not fall infinitely short of the divine work.¹⁰⁷ God alone is absolute; all other things are contracted.¹⁰⁸ Nor is there a medium between the Absolute and the contracted as those imagined who thought that the world-soul is mind existing subsequently to God but prior to the world's contraction. For only God is “world-soul” and “world-mind”—in a manner whereby “soul” is regarded as something absolute in which all the forms of things exist actually. Indeed, the philosophers were not adequately instructed regarding the Divine Word and Absolute Maximum. And so, they envisioned mind and soul and necessity as present uncontractedly in a certain unfolding of Absolute Necessity.

Therefore, forms do not have actual existence except (1) in the Word as Word and (2) contractedly in things.¹⁰⁹ But although the

forms which are in the created intellectual nature exist with a greater degree of independence, in accordance with the intellectual nature, nevertheless they are not uncontracted; and so, they *are* the intellect, whose operation is to understand by means of an abstract likeness, as Aristotle says.¹¹⁰ In the book *Conjectures* [I will include] certain points regarding this [topic].¹¹¹ Let the foregoing points about the world-soul suffice.

151 *Chapter Ten: The spirit of all things.*

Certain [thinkers] believed that motion, through which there is the union of form and matter, is a spirit—a medium, as it were, between form and matter. They considered it as pervading the firmament, the planets, and things terrestrial. The first [motion] they called “Atropos”—“without turning,” so to speak; for they believed that by a simple motion the firmament is moved from east to west. The second [motion] they called “Clotho,” i.e., turning; for the planets are moved counter to the firmament through a turning from west to east. The third [motion they called] “Lachesis,” i.e., fate, because chance governs terrestrial things.

The motion of the planets is as an unrolling of the first motion; and the motion of temporal and terrestrial things is the unrolling of the motion of the planets. Certain causes of coming events are latent in terrestrial things, as the produce [is latent] in the seed. Hence, [these thinkers] said that the things enfolded in the world-soul as in a ball are unfolded and extended through such motion. For the wise thought as if [along the following line]: a craftsman [who] wants to chisel a statue in stone and [who] has in himself the form of the statue, as an idea, produces—through certain instruments which he moves—the form of the statue in imitation of the idea; analogously, they thought, the world-mind or world-soul harbors in itself exemplars-of-things, which, through motion it unfolds in matter. And they said that this motion pervades all things, just as does the world-soul. They said that this motion—which, as fate, descends (in the firmament, the planets, and terrestrial things) actually and causally from substantified fate—is the unfolding of substantified fate. For through such motion, or spirit, a thing

152 is actually determined toward being such [as it is]. They said that this uniting spirit proceeds from both possibility and the world soul. For matter has—from its aptitude for receiving form—a certain appetite, just as what is base desires what is good and privation desires pos-

session; furthermore, form desires to exist actually but cannot exist absolutely, since it is not its own being and is not God.¹¹² Therefore, form descends, so that it exists contractedly in possibility; that is, while possibility ascends toward actual existence, form descends, so that it limits, and perfects, and terminates possibility. And so, from the ascent and the descent motion arises and conjoins the two. This motion is the medium-of-union of possibility and actuality, since from movable possibility and a formal mover, moving arises as a medium.

153 Therefore, this spirit, which is called nature, is spread throughout, and contracted by, the entire universe and each of its parts. Hence, nature is the enfolding (so to speak) of all things which occur through motion. But the following example shows how this motion is contracted from the universal into the particular and how order is preserved throughout its gradations. When I say “God exists,” this sentence proceeds by means of a certain motion but in such an order that I first articulate the letters, then the syllables, then the words, and then, last of all, the sentence—although the sense of hearing does not discern this order by stages. In like manner, motion descends by stages from the universal [*universum*] unto the particular, where it is contracted by the temporal or natural order. But this motion, or spirit, descends from the Divine Spirit, which moves all things by this motion. Hence, just as in an act of speaking there is a certain spirit (or breath) which proceeds from him who speaks—[a spirit] which is contracted into a sentence, as I mentioned—so God, who is Spirit, is the one from whom all motion descends. For Truth says: “It is not you who speak but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.”¹¹³ A similar thing holds true for all other motions and operations.

154 Therefore, this created spirit¹¹⁴ is a spirit in whose absence it would not be the case that anything is one or is able to exist. Now, through this spirit, which fills the whole world,¹¹⁵ the entire world and all things in it are naturally and conjointly that which they are, so that by means of this spirit possibility is present in actuality and actuality is present in possibility. And this [spirit] is the motion of the loving union of all things and oneness, so that there is one universe of all things. For although all things are moved individually so as to be, in the best manner, that which they are and so that none will exist exactly as another,¹¹⁶ nevertheless each thing in its own way either mediately or immediately contracts, and participates in, the motion of each other thing (just as the elements and the things composed of el-

emental principles [contract and participate in] the motion of the sky and just as all members [of the body contract and participate in] the motion of the heart), so that there is one

universe.¹¹⁷ And through this motion things exist in the best way they can. They are moved for the following reason: viz., so that they may be preserved in themselves or in species—[preserved] by means of the natural union of the different sexes; these sexes are united in nature, which enfolds motion; but in individuals they are contracted separately.

155 Therefore, it is not the case that any motion is unqualifiedly maximum motion, for this latter coincides with rest. Therefore, no motion is absolute, since absolute motion is rest and is God. And absolute motion enfolds all motions. Therefore, just as all possibility exists in Absolute Possibility, which is the Eternal God, and all form and actuality exist in Absolute Form, which is the Father's divine Word and Son, so all uniting motion and all uniting proportion and harmony exist in the Divine Spirit's Absolute Union, so that God is the one Beginning of all things. In Him and through Him all things exist¹¹⁸ in a certain oneness of trinity. They are contracted in a like manner in greater and lesser degree (within [the range between] the unqualifiedly Maximum and the unqualifiedly Minimum) according to their own gradations, so that in intelligent things, where to understand is to move, the gradation of possibility, actuality, and their uniting motion is one gradation, and in corporeal things, where to exist is to move, [the gradation] of matter, form, and their union is another gradation. I will touch upon these points elsewhere.¹¹⁹ Let the preceding [remarks] about the trinity of the universe suffice for the present.

156 *Chapter Eleven: Corollaries regarding motion.*

Perhaps those who will read the following previously unheard of [doctrines] will be amazed, since learned ignorance shows these [doctrines] to be true. We already know from the aforesaid (a) that the universe is trine, (b) that of all things there is none which is not *one* from possibility, actuality, and uniting motion,¹²¹ and (c) that none of these [three] can at all exist without the other [two], so that of necessity these [three] are present in all things according to very different degrees.¹²² [They are present] so differently that no two things in the universe can be altogether equal with respect to them, i.e., with respect to any one of them. However, it is not the case that in any genus—

even [the genus] of motion—we come to an unqualifiedly maximum and minimum.¹²³ Hence, if we consider the various movements of the spheres, [we will see that] it is not possible for the world-machine to have, as a fixed and immovable center, either our perceptible earth or air or fire or any other thing. For, with regard to motion, we do not come to an unqualifiedly minimum—i.e., to a *fixed* center. For the [unqualifiedly] minimum must coincide with the [unqualifiedly] maximum; therefore, the center of the world coincides with the circumference.¹²⁴ Hence, the world does not have a [fixed] circumference. For if it had a [fixed] center, it would also have a [fixed] circumference; and hence it would have its own beginning and end within itself, and it would be bounded in relation to something else, and beyond the world there would be both something else and space (*locus*). But all these [consequences] are false. Therefore, since it is not possible for the world to be enclosed between a physical center and [a physical] circumference, the world—of which God is the center and the circumference—is not understood. And although the world is not infinite, it cannot be conceived as finite, because it lacks boundaries within which it is enclosed.

- 157 Therefore, the earth, which cannot be the center, cannot be devoid of all motion. Indeed, it is even necessary that the earth be moved in such way that it could be moved infinitely less. Therefore, just as the earth is not the center of the world, so the sphere of fixed stars is not its circumference—although when we compare the earth with the sky, the former seems to be nearer to the center, and the latter nearer to the circumference. Therefore, the earth is not the center either of the eighth sphere or of any other sphere. Moreover, the appearance of the six constellations above the horizon does not establish that the earth is at the center of the eighth sphere. For even if the earth were at a distance from the center but were on the axis passing through the [sphere's] poles, so that one side [of the earth] were raised toward the one pole and the other side were lowered toward the other pole, then it is evident that only half the sphere would be visible to men, who would be as distant from the poles as the horizon is extended. Moreover, it is no less false that the center of the world is within the earth than that it is outside the earth; nor does the earth or any other sphere even have a center. For since the center is a point equidistant from the circumference and since there cannot exist a sphere or a circle so completely true that a truer one could not be posited, it is obvious that there cannot be posited a center [which is so true and precise] that a

still truer and more precise center could not be posited. Precise equidistance to different things cannot be found except in the case of God, because God alone is Infinite Equality. Therefore, He who is the center of the world, viz., the Blessed God, is also the center of the earth, of all spheres, and of all things in the world. Likewise, He is the infinite circumference of all things.¹²⁵

- 158 Moreover, in the sky there are not fixed and immovable poles—although the heaven of fixed stars appears to describe by its motion circles of progressively different sizes, colures which are smaller than the equinoctial [colure]. The case is similar for the intermediates. But it is necessary that every part of the sky be moved, even though [the parts are moved] unequally by comparison with the circles described by the motion of the stars. Hence, just as certain stars appear to describe a maximum circle, so certain stars [appear to describe] a minimum [circle]. And there is not a star which fails to describe an [approximate circle]. Therefore, since there is not a fixed pole in the [eighth] sphere, it is evident that we also do not find an exact middle point existing equidistantly, as it were, from the poles. Therefore, in the eighth sphere there is not a star which describes, through its revolution, a maximum circle. (For the star would have to be equidistant from the poles, which do not exist.) And consequently there is not [a
- 159 star] which describes a minimum circle. Therefore, the poles of the spheres coincide with the center,¹²⁶ so that the center is not anything except the pole, because the Blessed God [is the center and the pole]. And since we can discern motion only in relation to something fixed, viz., either poles or centers, and since we presuppose these [poles or centers] when we measure motions, we find that as we go about conjecturing, we err with regard to all [measurements]. And we are surprised when we do not find that the stars are in the right position according to the rules of measurement of the ancients, for we suppose that the ancients rightly conceived of centers and poles and measures.

From these [foregoing considerations] it is evident that the earth is moved. Now, from the motion of a comet, we learn that the elements of air and of fire are moved; furthermore, [we observe] that the moon [is moved] less from east to west than Mercury or Venus or the sun, and so on progressively. Therefore, the earth is moved even less than all [these] others; but, nevertheless, being a star, it does not describe a minimum circle around a center or a pole. Nor does the eighth sphere describe a maximum [circle], as was just proved.

160 Therefore, consider carefully the fact that just as in the eighth sphere the stars are [moved] around conjectural poles, so the earth, the moon, and the planets—as stars—are moved at a distance and with a difference around a pole [which] we conjecture to be where the center is believed to be. Hence, although the earth—as star—is nearer to the central pole, nevertheless it is moved and, in its motion, does not describe a minimum circle, as was indicated. Rather (though the matter appears to us to be otherwise), neither the sun nor the moon nor the earth nor any sphere can by its motion describe a true circle, since none of these are moved about a fixed [point]. Moreover, it is not the case that there can be posited a circle so true that a still truer one cannot be posited. And it is never the case that at two different times [a star or a sphere] is moved in precisely equal ways or that [on these two occasions its motion] describes equal approximate-circles—even if the matter does not seem this way to us.

161 Therefore, if with regard to what has now been said you want truly to understand something about the motion of the universe, you must merge the center and the poles, aiding yourself as best you can by your imagination. For example, if someone were on the earth but beneath the north pole [of the heavens] and someone else were at the north pole [of the heavens], then just as to the one on the earth it would appear that the pole is at the zenith, so to the one at the pole it would appear that the center is at the zenith.¹²⁷ And just as antipodes have the sky above, as do we, so to those [persons] who are at either pole [of the heavens] the earth would appear to be at the zenith. And at whichever [of these] anyone would be, he would believe himself to be at the center. Therefore, merge these different imaginative pictures so that the center is the zenith and vice versa.¹²⁸ Thereupon you will see—through the intellect, to which only learned ignorance is of help—that the world and its motion and shape cannot be apprehended.¹²⁹ For [the world] will appear as a wheel in a wheel and a sphere in a sphere—having its center and circumference nowhere, as was stated.

162 *Chapter Twelve: The conditions of the earth.*

The ancients did not attain unto the points already made, for they lacked learned ignorance. It has already¹³⁰ become evident to us that the earth is indeed moved, even though we do not perceive this to be the case. For we apprehend motion only through a certain compari-

son with something fixed. For example, if someone did not know that a body of water was flowing and did not see the shore while he was on a ship in the middle of the water, how would he recognize that the ship was being moved? And because of the fact that it would always seem to each person (whether he were on the earth, the sun, or another star) that he was at the “immovable” center, so to speak, and that all other things were moved: assuredly, it would always be the case that if he were on the sun, he would fix a set of poles in relation to himself; if on the earth, another set; on the moon, another; on Mars, another; and so on. Hence, the world-machine will have its center everywhere and its circumference nowhere, so to speak; for God, who is everywhere and nowhere, is its circumference and center.¹³¹

163 Moreover, the earth is not spherical, as some have said; yet, it tends toward sphericity, for the shape of the world is contracted in the world's parts, just as is [the world's] motion. Now, when an infinite line is considered as contracted in such way that, as contracted, it cannot be more perfect and more capable, it is [seen to be] circular; for in a circle the beginning coincides with the end. Therefore, the most nearly perfect motion is circular; and the most nearly perfect corporeal shape is therefore spherical. Hence, for the sake of the perfection, the entire motion of the part is oriented toward the whole. For example, heavy things [are moved] toward the earth and light things upwards; earth [is moved] toward earth, water toward water, air toward air, fire toward fire. And the motion of the whole tends toward circular motion as best it can, and all shape [tends toward] spherical shape—as we experience with regard to the parts of animals, to trees, and to the sky. Hence, one motion is more circular and more perfect than another. Similarly, shapes, too, are different.

164 Therefore, the shape of the earth is noble and spherical, and the motion of the earth is circular; but there could be a more perfect [shape or motion]. And because in the world there is no maximum or minimum with regard to perfections, motions, and shapes (as is evident from what was just said), it is not true that the earth is the lowliest and the lowest. For although [the earth] seems more central with respect to the world, it is also for this same reason nearer to the pole, as was said.¹³² Moreover, the earth is not a proportional part, or an aliquot part, of the world. For since the world does not have either a maximum or a minimum, it also does not have a middle point or aliquot parts, just as a man or an animal does not ei-

ther. For example, a hand is not an aliquot part of a man, although its weight does seem to bear a comparative relation to the body—and likewise regarding its size and shape.¹³³ Moreover, [the earth's] blackness is not evidence of its lowliness. For if someone were on the sun, the brightness which is visible to us would not be visible [to him]. For when the body of the sun is considered, [it is seen to] have a certain more central “earth,” as it were, and a certain “fiery and circumferential” brightness, as it were, and in its middle a “watery cloud and brighter air,” so to speak—just as our earth [has] its own elements. Hence, if someone were outside the region of fire, then through the medium of the fire our earth, which is on the circumference of [this] region, would appear to be a bright star—just as to us, who are on the circumference of the region of the sun, the sun appears to be very bright. Now, the moon does not appear to be so bright, perhaps because we are within its circumference and are facing the more central parts—i.e., are in the moon's “watery region,” so to speak. Hence, its light is not visible [to us], although the moon does have its own light, which is visible to those who are at the most outward points of its circumference; but only the light of the reflection of the sun is visible to us. On this account, too, the moon's heat—which it no doubt produces as a result of its motion and in greater degree on the circumference, where the motion is greater—is not communicated to us, unlike what happens with regard to the sun. Hence, our earth seems to be situated between the region of the sun and the region of the moon; and through the medium of the sun and the moon it partakes of the influence of other stars which—because of the fact that we are outside their regions—we do not see. For we see only the regions of those stars which gleam.

166 Therefore, the earth is a noble star which has a light and a heat and an influence that are distinct and different from [that of] all other stars, just as each star differs from each other star with respect to its light, its nature, and its influence. And each star communicates its light and influence to the others, though it does not aim to do so, since all stars gleam and are moved only in order to exist in the best way [they can]; as a consequence thereof a sharing arises (just as light shines of its own nature and not in order that I may see; yet, as a consequence, a sharing occurs when I use light for the purpose of seeing). Similarly, Blessed God created all things in such way that when each thing desires to conserve its own existence as a divine work, it conserves it in communion with others. Accordingly, just as by virtue of the fact

that the foot exists merely for walking, it serves not only itself but also the eye, the hands, the body, and the entire human being (and similarly for the eye and the other members), so a similar thing holds true regarding the parts of the world. For Plato referred to the world as an animal.¹³⁴ If you take God to be its soul, without intermingling, then many of the points I have been making will be clear to you.

167 Moreover, we ought not to say that because the earth is smaller than the sun and is influenced by the sun, it is more lowly [than the sun]. For the entire region-of-the-earth, which extends to the circumference of fire, is large. And although the earth is smaller than the sun—as we know from the earth's shadow and from eclipses—we do not know to what extent the *region* of the sun is larger or smaller than the region of the earth. However, the sun's region cannot be precisely equal to the earth's, for no star can be equal to another star. Moreover, the earth is not the smallest star, because the earth is larger than the moon, as our experience of eclipses has taught us. And [the earth is larger] than Mercury, too, as certain [people] maintain; and perhaps [it is also larger] than other stars. Hence, the evidence from size does not establish [the earth's] lowliness.

168 Furthermore, the influence which [the earth] receives is not evidence establishing its imperfection. For being a star, perhaps the earth, too, influences the sun and the solar region, as I said.¹³⁵ And since we do not experience ourselves in any other way than as being in the center where influences converge, we experience nothing of this counter-influence. For suppose the earth is possibility; and suppose the sun is the soul, or formal actuality, with respect to the possibility; and suppose the moon is the middle link, so that these [three] stars, which are situated within one region, unite their mutual influences (the other stars—viz., Mercury, Venus, and the others—being above, as the ancients and even some moderns said). Then, it is evident that the mutual relationship of influence is such that one influence cannot exist without the other. Therefore, in each alike [viz., earth, sun, moon] the influence will be both one and three in accordance with its [i.e., the influence's] own degrees. Therefore, it is evident that human beings cannot know whether with respect to these things [viz., the influences] the region of the earth exists in a less perfect and less noble degree in relation to the regions of the other stars (viz., the sun, the moon, and the others). Nor [can we know this] with respect to space, either.

169 For example, [we cannot rightly claim to know] that our portion of the

world is the habitation of men and animals and vegetables which are proportionally less noble [than] the inhabitants in the region of the sun and of the other stars. For although God is the center and circumference of all stellar regions and although natures of different nobility proceed from Him and inhabit each region (lest so many places in the heavens and on the stars be empty and lest only the earth—presumably among the lesser things—be inhabited), nevertheless with regard to the intellectual natures a nobler and more perfect nature cannot, it seems, be given (even if there are inhabitants of another kind on other stars) than the intellectual nature which dwells both here on earth and in its own region. For man does not desire a different nature but only to be perfected in his own nature.

170 Therefore, the inhabitants of other stars—of whatever sort these inhabitants might be—bear no comparative relationship to the inhabitants of the earth (*istius mundi*). [This is true] even if, with respect to the goal of the universe, that entire region bears to this entire region a certain comparative relationship which is hidden to us—so that in this way the inhabitants of this earth or region bear, through the medium of the whole region, a certain mutual relationship to those other inhabitants. (By comparison, the particular parts of the fingers of a hand bear, through the medium of the hand, a comparative relationship to a foot; and the particular parts of the foot [bear], through the medium of the foot, [a comparative relationship] to a hand—so that all [members] are comparatively related to the whole animal.)¹³⁶

171 Hence, since that entire region is unknown to us, those inhabitants remain altogether unknown. By comparison, here on earth it happens that animals of one species—[animals] which constitute one specific region, so to speak—are united together; and because of the common specific region, they mutually share those things which belong to their region; they neither concern themselves about other [regions] nor apprehend truly anything regarding them.¹³⁷ For example, an animal of one species cannot grasp the thought which [an animal] of another [species] expresses through vocal signs—except for a superficial grasping in the case of a very few signs, and even then [only] after long experience and only conjecturally. But we are able to know disproportionately less about the inhabitants of another region. We surmise that in the solar region there are inhabitants which are more solar, brilliant, illustrious, and intellectual—being even more spiritlike than [those] on the moon, where [the inhabitants] are more moonlike, and

than [those] on the earth, [where they are] more material and more solidified. Thus, [we surmise], these intellectual solar natures are mostly in a state of actuality and scarcely in a state of potentiality; but the terrestrial [natures] are mostly in potentiality and scarcely in actuality; lunar [natures] fluctuate between [solar and terrestrial natures]. We believe this on the basis of the fiery influence of the sun and on the basis of the watery and aerial influence of the moon and the weighty material influence of the earth. In like manner, we surmise that none of the other regions of the stars are empty of inhabitants—
 172 as if there were as many particular mondial parts of the one universe as there are stars, of which there is no number.¹³⁸ Resultantly, the one universal world is contracted—in a threefold way and in terms of its own fourfold descending progression—in so many particular [parts] that they are without number except to Him who created all things in a [definite] number.¹³⁹

Moreover, the earthly destruction-of-things which we experience is not strong evidence of [the earth's] lowliness. For since there is one universal world and since there are causal relations between all the individual stars, it cannot be evident to us that anything is altogether corruptible;¹⁴⁰ rather, [a thing is corruptible only] according to one or another mode of being, for the causal influences—being contracted, as it were, in one individual—are separated, so that the mode of being such and such perishes. Thus, death does not occupy any space, as Virgil says.¹⁴¹ For death seems to be nothing except a composite thing's being resolved into its components. And who can know whether such dissolution occurs only in regard to terrestrial inhabitants?

173 Certain [people] have said that on earth there are as many species of things as there are stars. Therefore, if in this way the earth contracts to distinct species the influence of all the stars, why is there not a similar occurrence in the regions of other stars which receive stellar influences? And who can know whether all the influences which at first are contracted at the time of composition revert at the time of dissolution, so that an animal which is now a contracted individual of a certain species in the region of the earth is freed from all influence of the stars, so that it returns to its origins? Or [who can know] whether only the form reverts to the exemplar or world-soul, as the Platonists say, or whether only the form reverts to its own star (from which the species received actual existence on mother earth) and the matter [reverts] to possibility, while the uniting spirit remains in the

174 motion of the stars?—[whether. i.e.,] when this spirit ceases to unite and when it withdraws because of the indisposition of the [animal's] organs or for some other reason, so that by its difference of motion it induces a separation, then it returns as if to the stars, and its form ascends above the influence of the stars, whereas its matter descends beneath [their influence]. Or [who can know] whether the forms of each region come to rest in a higher form—e.g., an intellectual form—and through this higher form attain the end which is the goal of the world? And how is this end in God attained by the lower forms through this higher form? And how does the higher form ascend to the circumference, which is God, while the body descends toward the center, where God is also present, so that the motion of all [the components] is toward God? For just as the center and the circumference are one in God. so some day the body (although it seemed to descend as if to the center) and the soul ([although it seemed to ascend as if] to the circumference) will be united again in God, at the time when not all motion will cease but [only] that which relates to generation. So to speak: the essential parts of the world (without which the world could not exist) will, necessarily, come together again when there ceases to be successive generation and when the uniting spirit returns and unites possibility to its [i.e., spirit's] own form.

Of himself a man cannot know these matters; [he can know them] only if he has [this knowledge] from God in a quite special way. Although no one doubts that the Perfect God created all things for Himself and that He does not will the destruction of any of the things He created, and although everyone knows that God is a very generous rewarder of all who worship Him, nevertheless only God Himself, who is His own Activity, knows the manner of Divine Activity's present and future remuneration. Nevertheless, I will say a few things about this later,¹⁴² according to the divinely inspired truth. At the moment, it suffices that I have, in ignorance, touched upon these matters in the foregoing way.

175 *Chapter Thirteen: The admirable divine art in the creation of the world and of the elements.*

Since it is the unanimous opinion of the wise that visible things—in particular, the size, beauty, and order of things—lead us to an admiration for the divine art and the divine excellence, and since I have dealt with some of the products of God's admirable knowledge, let

me (with regard to the creation of the universe and by way of admiration) very briefly add a few points about the place and the order of the elements.

In creating the world, God used arithmetic, geometry, music, and likewise astronomy.¹⁴³ (We ourselves also use these arts when we investigate the comparative relationships of objects, of elements, and of motions.) For through arithmetic God united things. Through geometry He shaped them, in order that they would thereby attain firmness, stability, and mobility in accordance with their conditions. Through music He proportioned things in such way that there is not more earth in earth than water in water, air in air, and fire in fire, so that no one element is altogether reducible to another. As a result, it happens that the world-machine cannot perish. Although part of one [element] can be reduced to another, it is not the case that all the air which is mixed with water can ever be transformed into water; for the surrounding air would prevent this; thus, there is ever a mingling of the elements. Hence, God brought it about that *parts* of the elements would be resolved into one another. And since this occurs with a delay, a thing is generated from the harmony of elements in relation to the generable thing itself; and this thing exists as long as the harmony of elements continues; when the harmony is destroyed, what was generated is destroyed and dissolved.

176 And so, God, who created all things in number, weight, and measure,¹⁴⁴ arranged the elements in an admirable order. (Number pertains to arithmetic, weight to music, measure to geometry.) For example, heaviness is dependent upon lightness, which restricts it (for example, earth, which is heavy, is dependent upon fire in its “center,” so to speak); and lightness depends upon heaviness (e.g., fire depends upon earth). And when Eternal Wisdom ordained the elements, He used an inexpressible proportion, so that He foreknew to what extent each element should precede the other and so that He weighted the elements in such way that proportionally to water's being lighter than earth, air is lighter than water, and fire lighter than air—with the result that weight corresponds to size and, likewise, a container occupies more space than what is contained [by it]. Moreover, He combined the elements with one another in such a relationship that, necessarily, the one element is present in the other. With regard to this combination, the earth is an animal, so to speak, according to Plato.¹⁴⁵ It has stones in place of bones, rivers in place of veins, trees in place of hair; and there are animals which are fostered within its hair, just

as worms are fostered in the hair of animals.

177 And, so to speak: earth is to fire as the world is to God. For fire, in its relation to earth, has many resemblances to God. [For example] there is no limit to fire's power; and fire acts upon, penetrates, illumines, distinguishes, and forms all earthly things through the medium of air and of water, so that, as it were, in all the things which are begotten from earth there is nothing except fire's distinct activities. Hence, the forms of things are different as a result of a difference in fire's brightness. But fire is intermingled with things; it does not exist without them; and terrestrial things do not exist [without it]. God, however, is only absolute.¹⁴⁶ Hence, God, who is light and in whom there is no darkness,¹⁴⁷ is spoken of by the ancients as absolute consuming fire¹⁴⁸ and as absolute brightness. All existing things endeavor, as best they can, to participate in His "brightness and blazing splendor," so to speak—as we notice with regard to all the stars, in which participated brightness is found materially contracted. Indeed, this distinguishing and penetrating participated brightness is contracted "immaterially," so to speak, in the life of things which are alive with an intellective life.

178 Who would not admire this Artisan, who with regard to the spheres, the stars, and the regions of the stars used such skill that there is—though without complete precision—both a harmony of all things and a diversity of all things? [This Artisan] considered in advance the sizes, the placing, and the motion of the stars in the one world; and He ordained the distances of the stars in such way that unless each region were as it is, it could neither exist nor exist in such a place and with such an order—nor could the universe exist. Moreover, He bestowed on all stars a differing brightness, influence, shape, color, and heat. (Heat causally accompanies the brightness.) And He established the interrelationship of parts so proportionally that in each thing the motion of the parts is oriented toward the whole. With heavy things [the motion is] downward toward the center, and with light things it is upward from the center and around the center (e.g., we perceive the motion of the stars as circular).

179 With regard to these objects, which are so worthy of admiration, so varied, and so different, we recognize—through learned ignorance and in accordance with the preceding points—that we cannot know the rationale for any of God's works but can only marvel; for the Lord is great, whose greatness is without end.¹⁴⁹ Since He is Absolute Max-

imality: as He is the Author and Knower of all His works, so He is also the End [of them all]; thus, all things are in Him and nothing is outside Him. He is the Beginning, the Middle, and the End of all things, the Center and the Circumference of all things—so that He alone is sought in all things; for without Him all things are nothing. When He alone is possessed, all things are possessed, because He is all things. When He is known, all things are known, because He is the Truth of all things. He even wills for us to be brought to the point of admiring so marvelous a world-machine. Nevertheless, the more we admire it, the more He conceals it from us; for it is Himself alone whom¹⁵⁰ He wills to be sought with our whole heart and affection. And since He dwells in inaccessible light,¹⁵¹ which all things seek, He alone can open to those who knock and can give to those who ask.¹⁵² Of all created things none has the power to open itself to him who knocks and to show what it is; for without God, who is present in all things, each thing is nothing.

180 But all things reply to him who in learned ignorance asks them what they are or in what manner they exist or for what purpose they exist: “Of ourselves [we are] nothing, and of our own ability we cannot tell you anything other than nothing. For we do not even know ourselves; rather, God alone—through whose understanding we are that which He wills, commands, and knows to be in us—[has knowledge of us]. Indeed, all of us are mute things. He is the one who speaks in [us] all., He has made us; He alone knows what we are, in what manner we exist, and for what purpose. If you wish to know something about us, seek it in our Cause and Reason, not in us. *There* you will find all things, while seeking one thing. And only in Him will you be able to discover yourself.”

See to it, says our learned ignorance, that you discover yourself in Him. Since in Him all things are Him, it will not be possible that you lack anything. Yet, our approaching Him who is inaccessible is not our prerogative; rather, it is the prerogative of Him who gave us both a face which is turned toward Him and a consuming desire to seek [Him]. When we do [seek Him], He is most gracious and will not abandon us. Instead, having disclosed Himself to us, He will satisfy us eternally “when His glory shall appear.”¹⁵³

May He be blessed forever.

ABBREVIATIONS

- Ap.* *Apologia Doctae Ignorantiae*
- DI* *De Docta Ignorantia*
- DP* *De Possest* (reprinted in *PNC*)
- IL* *De Ignota Litteratura*
- MFCG* *Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft* (ed. Rudolf Haubst)
- NA* *De Li Non Aliud* (reprinted in J. Hopkins, *Nicholas of Cusa on God as Not-other: A Translation and an Appraisal of De Li Non Aliud*. Minneapolis: Banning Press, 1983 (2nd ed.))
- NC* *Nicoló da Cusa*. Florence: Sansoni, 1962. (Pubblicazioni della Facoltà di Magisterio dell'Università di Padova)
- NK* *Nikolaus von Kues. Einführung in sein philosophisches Denken*. Ed. Klaus Jacobi. Munich: K. Alber, 1979
- PL* *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne
- PNC* J. Hopkins. *A Concise Introduction to the Philosophy of Nicholas of Cusa*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980 (2nd ed.)
- SHAW* *Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-historische Klasse*. Heidelberg: C. Winter

PRAENOTANDA

1. All references to Nicholas of Cusa's works are to the Latin texts—specifically to the following texts in the following editions (unless explicitly indicated otherwise):

- A. Heidelberg Academy edition of *Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia: De Concordantia Catholica; Sermones; De Coniecturis; De Deo Abscondito; De Quaerendo Deum; De Filiatione Dei; De Dato Patris Luminum; Coniectura de Ultimis Diebus; De Genesi; Apologia Doctae Ignorantiae; Idiota* (1983 edition) *de Sapientia, de Mente, de Staticis Experimentis; De Pace Fidei; De Li Non Aliud* (Banning reprint); *De Venatione Sapientiae; Compendium; De Apice Theoriae*.
- B. Texts authorized by the Heidelberg Academy and published in the Latin-German editions of Felix Melner Verlag's Philosophische Bibliothek: *De Docta Ignorantia, De Beryllo, De Possest* (Minnesota reprint).
- C. Paris edition (1514) of the *Opera Cusana: Complementum Theologicum, De Aequalitate, De Principio* (=Paris edition, Vol. II, Part 1, fol. 7^r - 11^v).
- D. Strasburg edition (1488) of the *Opera Cusana* as edited by Paul Wilpert and republished by W. de Gruyter (Berlin, 1967, 2 vols.): *Cribratio Alkoran, De Ludo Globi*.
- E. Banning Press edition (1985) of *De Visione Dei*.

The references given for some of these treatises indicate book and chapter, for others margin number and line, and for still others page and line. Readers should have no difficulty determining which is which when they consult the particular Latin text. E.g., “*DI* II, 6 (125:19-20)” indicates *De Docta Ignorantia*, Book II, Chap. 6, margin number 125, lines 19-20. And “*Ap.* 8:14-16” indicates *Apologia Doctae Ignorantiae*, p. 8, lines 14-16.

- 2. A number of references in the Notes have been adapted from Vol. I of the Heidelberg Academy edition of *Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia*.
- 3. To reduce publication costs, extensive references to the writings of Anicius Boethius, Meister Eckhart, and Thierry of Chartres have not been incorporated into the Notes. Readers are advised to consult the works of Joseph E. Hofmann, Hans G. Senger, Herbert Wackerzapp, and Pierre Duhern as listed in *PNC*.
- 4. The margin numbers in the English translation of *DI* correspond to those found in the Latin-German editions, cited in n. 1 above.
- 5. Any Latin words inserted into the English translation for purposes of clarification are placed in parentheses—except that nouns whose respective cases have been changed to the nominative are bracketed. All expansions of the translations are bracketed.
- 6. References to the Psalms are to the Douay version (and, in parentheses, to the King James's version).
- 7. References to *IL* are given in terms of the new critical edition published in *Nicholas*

of Cusa's *Debate with John Wenck: A Translation and an Appraisal of De Ignorata Litteratura and Apologia Doctae Ignorantiae* (Minneapolis: The Arthur J. Banning Press, 1981; 2nd edition, 1984).

NOTES TO *LEARNED IGNORANCE*, BOOK TWO

1. I.e., Cardinal Julian Cesarini. See n. 1 of the notes to Book One.
2. *DI* I, 17 (49:13-14); I, 16 (46:10-12).
3. Regarding the phrase "*in sua ratione*" ("in its definition") at 92:4-5, cf. *DP* 63:10-12: "For mathematics does not deal with a circle as it is in a corruptible floor but as it is in its [i.e., the circle's] own rational ground, or definition."
4. Viz., the rule that except for God all positible things differ (91:12-13).
5. *De Coniecturis* II, 6 (105:9-15); II, 16 (163:1-9).
6. *Ibid.* I, 10 (44-45). Cf. *ibid.* I, 9 (37:6-16).
7. Nicholas's references to mathematics are to be coordinated as follows: no ascent to the unqualifiedly Maximum is possible, as is evident from the illustration of the ascending scale of numbers; no descent to the unqualifiedly Minimum is possible, as is evident from the illustration of the dividing of a continuum. See *DI* I, 5 (13:13-2 1) and I, 17 (47:5-7).
In dividing a continuum, no transition is made to oneness, which Nicholas regards as infinite [cf. *DI* I, 3 (9:7-8) with I, 5 (13:29-3 1) and I, 5 (14:1-8, 13-14). Also note *De Coniecturis* I, 5 (18:1-2).] Oneness is not subsequent to dividing (or subtracting), because it must be *presupposed* in order for dividing and subtracting to be possible. Thus, oneness precedes all plurality; in its absence, "there would be no distinction of things; nor would any order or any plurality or any degrees of comparatively greater and lesser be found among numbers; indeed, there would not be number," states Nicholas in I, 5 (13:25-28).
8. *DI* I, 6 (15:6- 10).
9. *DI* I, 5 (13:17-2 1).
10. *DI* III, 2. Jesus is this alluded-to Maximum.
11. Cf. *DP* 6:8-15.
12. See the reference in n. 4 of the notes to Book One. Also note *DI* I, 1 (2:4-5); I, 5 (13: 10); 11, 1 (97:19-20); 11, 2 (104:5-9); 11, 10 (154:7-9); 111, 1 (185:8-9); 111, 3 (201:13-15).
13. *DI* I, 6 (15:12-18).
14. *DI* I, 13 (35:9-28).
15. Though Nicholas believes that the more *one* a thing is, the more like unto God it is, he believes at the same time that God's oneness transcends the power of human conception [*DI* I, 4 (11:7-9)]. These joint beliefs leave him with the problem of reconciling his language of resemblance with his assertion that there is no comparative relation between the finite and the infinite [I, 3 (9:4-5)]. See *PNC*, pp. 19-28 and 38.
16. In the corresponding line of the Latin text (99:13) I am reading "*contingen-*

ter” for “contingenti”.

17. Nowhere in *DI* or in any of his writings does Nicholas identify God with creation or creation with God. Note his response (*Ap.* 22:9-23:14) to John Wenck's charge that he taught that all things coincide with God. In his response he cites the above passage.

18. Pseudo-Hermes Trismegistus, “Book of the Twenty-four Philosophers,” Proposition 14 [Clemens Baeumker, ed., “Das pseudo-hermetische ‘Buch der vierundzwanzig Meister’ (Liber XXIV philosophorum). Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Neupythagoreismus und Neuplatonismus im Mittelalter,” in *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie und Theologie des Mittelalters*, 25 (1928), 194-214].

19. See n. 24 of the notes to Book One.

20. In this chapter Nicholas uses both “*abesse*” and “*adesse*” to indicate dependent being. I have translated “*abesse*” by “derived being” and “*adesse*” by “adventitious being.”

21. The word “*in*” is here crucial. The universe as enfolded *in* God ontologically prior to its unfolded, temporal existence *is* God, says Nicholas. Insofar as it is unfolded and temporal, however, it is neither God nor from God (i.e., from God in the sense of God's having caused its temporality and plurality); rather, its temporality and plurality derive from contingency. (See 99:11-13 of the present chapter.) Of course, its being qua being *does* derive from God.

22. Cf. I, 26:6-13, where Wenck cites Eckhart's reason for why God did not create the world earlier.

23. *DI* I, 3 (9:4-5); I, 1 (3:2-3).

24. Regarding the view that a woman is a man manqué, see Aristotle, *De Generatione Animalium* II, 3 (737^a 28f.) and St. Thomas, *Summa Theologiae* Ia 99, 2, ad 1.

25. *De Coniecturis* II, 14 (143:7-8).

26. See the references in n. 12 above and in n. 4 of the notes to Book One.

27. See n. 15 above.

28. *DI* III, 1 (189:4-21); I, 1 (2:3-5).

29. See n. 78 of the notes to Book One.

30. *DI* I, 4 (12:24-25).

31. *DI* I, 5 (14:9-12).

32. In the corresponding line of the Latin text (107:4), I am reading “*complicata*” for “*explicata*”.

33. *DI* I, 7 (18:14-15).

34. *DI* I, 7 (21:2-5).

35. *De Coniecturis* I, 2 (7:3-5).

36. *DI* I, 5 (14:18-21).

37. In the corresponding line of the Latin text (108:14) I am reading “*explicare omnia, scilicet*” in place of “*explicare, omnia scilicet*”. Nicholas's point here parallels his point at 107:12.

38. In the preceding paragraph (108:9-10) it was said that “God, in eternity, understood one thing in one way and another thing in another way.” If God's understanding is His being, then there seems to be a sense in which He is these things, reasons Nicholas.

39. Nicholas is clearer in *DI* III, 1 (184:5-7): “Genera exist only contractedly in

species; and species exist only in individuals, which alone exist actually.” Cf. II, 6 (124:13-125:20).

40. *DI* II, 2 (102:12-15).

41. *DI* I, 21 (66:4). See n. 112 of the notes to Book One.

42. Nicholas says not only that all things are in God (see n. 21 above) but also that God is in all things. He here attempts to give a clarifying illustration of the latter thesis. Note *DI* II, 4 (118:3-13); II, 3 (107:12).

43. In the corresponding line of the Latin text (112:13) I am reading “*absoluto absolute*” in place of “*absoluta absoluto*”.

44. In the corresponding line of the Latin text (113:6) I am reading “*qua*” in place of “*quo*”. At 113:8 Wilpert’s punctuation needs to be revised.

45. *DI* I, 16 (42:4-5), where Nicholas alludes to what has been shown in I, 13-15.

46. As a rule, Nicholas uses “world” and “universe” interchangeably. At *DI* 11, 12 (170:2), however, “*iste mundus*” means “the earth”.

47. *DI* I, 11 (30:11-13).

48. Nicholas calls the world infinite and eternal, but in a qualified sense of “infinite” and of “eternal”. It is privatively infinite [*DI* II, 1 (97:5)]; and it is eternal in the sense discussed in II, 2 (101). Also see II, 8 (140:1-3) as well as n. 21 above. Cf. Anselm of Canterbury, *Proslogion* 13.

49. Nicholas’s use here of the phrase “improportionally short of” is another testimony to his clear rejection of pantheism. See n. 17 above.

50. In *NA* Nicholas changes his mind and is willing to make such statements as “In the sky God is sky.” See J. Hopkins, *Nicholas of Cusa on God as Not-other: A Translation and an Appraisal of De Li Non Aliud* (Minneapolis: Banning Press, 2nd edition, 1983), p. 168, n. 18.

As for the sense in which God is sun without plurality and difference, see *DP* 11.

51. I.e., is not the absolutely First.

52. Nicholas does not hesitate to use the word “*emanatio*” since his version of emanation does not conflict with the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*. See *PNC*, p. 166, n. 83.

53. *Metaphysica*, tractate IX, chap. 4 (Venice edition of 1498).

54. See *PNC*, pp. 37 and 171, n. 159 regarding the translation of this sentence and the implications thereof.

55. G. S. Kirk and J. E. Raven. *The Presocratic Philosophers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), pp. 375-376.

56. *DI* I, 2 (5:9-12); I, 17 (50:9-13).

57. See *PNC*, pp. 169-170, n. 153.

58. *DI* III, 4 (204: 10-11).

59. *DI* I, 13-15.

60. *DI* I, 16 (42:4-5); cf. I, 17 (48:1-2).

61. Cf. *DI* II, 6 (125:9-10). See *De Coniecturis* II, 4 (92:13-16).

62. See n. 24 of the notes to Book One.

63. Nicholas is here drawing a parallel. Just as in God there is Oneness, Equality, and Union [*DI* I, 7 (21:10-14)], so in the universe there is a oneness, an equality, and a union of things. See the passage (in Book Two) that corresponds to the plac-

ing of n. 81 below.

64. *DI* II, 1 (91:12-13); I, 3 (9:10-15).

65. See n. 48 above.

66. *DI* II, 2 (104:7); I, 1 (2:4-5); II, 5 (121:6-7). See n. 4 of the notes to Book One.

67. *DI* III, 1 (189:15-21); II, 2 (104:15-20).

68. In the corresponding line of the Latin text (122:3) I am reading “*a qua*” in place of “*a quo*”. Cf. 147:15.

69. *De Coniecturis* I, 4. By the time Nicholas wrote this treatise his views had become modified. The four onenesses are now said to be God, intelligence, soul, and body. See n. 73 below.

70. *Ibid.* I, 3 (e.g., 10:6-8; 11:1-2).

71. *DI* II, 3 (109:13-15); III, 1 (184:5-7).

72. *DI* I, 22 (68:4-10); II, 9 (150:20-25); III, 8 (227:12-14).

73. Nicholas does not discuss this topic in *De Coniecturis*, as he had planned to. Josef Koch claimed that during the intervening time Nicholas switched from a *Seinsmetaphysik* to an *Einheitsmetaphysik*. See *Die Ars coniecturalis des Nikolaus von Kues* (Cologne: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1956), e.g., pp. 16 and 23.

74. *DI* I, 20 (59:4-20); I, 7-9; I, 19.

75. *DI* II, 10 (154:7-13).

76. *DI* I, 7 (18:14).

77. *DI* II, 9 (140:3-8).

78. In I, 7 (18: 10-11) Nicholas identifies otherness and mutability.

79. In the corresponding passage in the Latin text I have not adopted Wilpert's editorial addition.

80. *DI* II, 9. According to Nicholas (in II, 9) the Platonists regarded connecting necessity as the world-soul. Nicholas does not endorse this view either here or in the later passage. He believes that, in a special sense, God is World-soul.

81. Nicholas previously mentioned a different way in which the oneness of the universe is three. See *DI* II, 5 (120:3-4) and n. 63 above.

82. *DI* II, 9. See n. 80 above.

83. In *DI* II, 8 (140:1-2) Nicholas identifies Absolute Possibility with God [N.B. II, 8 (136)]. Absolute Possibility is minimum being; b6t in God minimum and maximum coincide.

In the passage above, however, Nicholas is not identifying absolute possibility with God. See n. 84 below and n. 48 of my introduction in *Nicholas of Cusa's Debate with John Wenck*.

84. By “the last three modes of being” Nicholas means connecting necessity, actually being this or that, and possibility. He does not mean *Absolute* Possibility qua God-as is shown clearly by his subsequent example of the rose and his reiteration of the three modes as “the mode of being of possibility, the mode of being of necessity, and the mode of being of actual determination.” Nicholas, in fact, here leaves open the question of whether absolute possibility is or is not God. In chapter 8, where he discusses the Platonists' view that Absolute Possibility is not God, he puts forth his own diametrically opposed view.

85. It would because the simple (incomposite) precedes the composite [*DI* I, 7 (21:4); *DP* 46:9].

86. *Asclepius* 14. [p. 313 of *Corpus Hermeticum*, ed. A. D. Nock (Paris: Société d'Édition "Les Belles Lettres," Vol. 2, 1945)].

87. Cf. *Idiota de Mente* 5 (86:12-16).

88. *DI* II, 9 (150:9-10); III, 1 (183:10-13).

89. Nicholas's placing of "*non . . . nisi*" in his Latin sentences does not always accurately reflect what he means. Here what he means is expressible with the help of hyphens: "God is only the cause-of-actuality" (i.e., He is not the cause-of-possibility). This thought is better expressed in English as "God is the cause only of actuality" (i.e., not also of possibility).

90. *DI* I, 16 (42:13-14).

91. See notes 21 and 48 above.

92. *De Coniecturis* II, 9. Several of the topics signaled in *DI*, including this one, are not dealt with in the detail which Nicholas's words herald. Cf. n. 73 above.

93. *DI* I, 6 (15:13-15).

94. Regarding the translation of this sentence (143:16-17), cf. the Latin with the sentence in II, 10 (151:26-29).

95. In the corresponding line of the Latin text (147:6) I am reading "*motus, talis*" instead of "*notio talis*".

96. A major problem for the reader of *DI* II, 9 is to determine when Nicholas is endorsing a statement and when he is not. His own viewpoint throughout this chapter is presented unclearly. In the above passage he is merely representing the Platonists' view.

97. *DI* I, 6 (15:6-10); II, 1 (96:1-4); II, 8 (136:1-8).

98. *DI* I, 6 (15:3-4); II, 8 (136:9-10).

99. This statement is inferable by piecing together various of Nicholas's assertions. E.g., *DI* I, 5 (14:6-8); I, 7 (21:1-3); I, 23 (70:23); I, 21 (66:7); I, 14 (37:12-13).

100. *DI* I, 16 (42:4-5).

101. Nicholas does not subscribe to the view that intermediate between God and the world there is a world-soul (whether contracted or uncontracted) which harbors the Forms of the objects in the world. (If there were such a soul, however, he believes that it would have to be contracted.) Instead, he teaches that the Word of God is the one infinite Form of forms. He is prepared to call this Word "World-soul" for much the same reason he is prepared to call God "sun". Cf. *DI* II, 9 (150:13-16) with *DP* 11. Also note *DP* 12:15-21 and *Idiota de Mente* 13 (145:7-9).

102. Nicholas is not here endorsing the view that there is a world-soul contracted through possibility. (See notes 96 and 101 above.) He is drawing the conclusion that a Platonistic type world-soul would have to be contracted, could not exist apart from other things (and therefore would not be divine), and could not be the repository of a plurality of exemplars.

103. *DI* I, 16 (45:7-18).

104. *DI* II, 2 (103:1-4).

105. Cf. *DI* II, 10 (151:18-29).

106. *DI* II, 4 (115:10-14); II, 5 (118:5-6).

107. Note that the Latin text corresponding to this long English sentence needs to be repunctuated.

108. *DI* I, 6 (15:3-4); II, 8 (136:9-10); II, 9 (148:8); III, 1 (183:10-13).

109. Since in the Word of God these forms *are* the Word of God, they do not retain their plurality but exist absolutely in the Absolute, teaches Nicholas. In the subsequent sentence Nicholas makes clear that contracted forms exist in one way in the finite objects whose forms they are and in another way in the abstracting intellect. [See II, 6 (125)]. Forms, therefore, have three different modes of being: (1) as they are in God, so to speak; (2) as they are in formed objects; (3) as they are in the abstracting intellect.

110. *De Anima* III, 8 (431^b 28-432^a4).

111. See n. 73 above.

112. I am considering “*et subsistere*” as deleted at 152:5 of the corresponding Latin text.

113. Matt. 10:20.

114. I.e., the spirit called “nature”.

115. Wisd. 1:7.

116. *DI* I, 1 (2:4-5); II, 2 (104:5-9); II, 5 (120:14); II, 1 (91:12-13); etc.

117. *DI* II, 7 (128:6-11).

118. Col. 1: 16-17. *DI* II, 5 (118:3-8). See n. 21 above.

119. *De Coniecturis* II, 9-10.

120. *DI* II, 7 (130:10-12).

121. Combine *DI* II, 7 (130:3-4,10-12) and II, 10 (154:4-7).

122. *DI* II, 8 (137:9-14); II, 10 (154:7-9).

123. *DI* II, 10 (155:1-3); II, 8 (136:10-14); III, 1 (183:3-10). *DP* 10: 19-21.

124. Cf. *DI* I, 23 (70:7-8). Nicholas's reasoning seems to be the following: The center-of-the-world, an unqualifiedly minimum, cannot be a fixed, physical center, because with regard to motions and other things that can be comparatively greater and lesser, we do not come to an unqualifiedly minimum, with which the unqualifiedly maximum coincides [*DI* I, 3 (9:4-7); II, 1 (96:1-9); II, 10 (155:1-3); II, 12 (164:2-4); III, 1 (183:3-10). See *DP* 10:19-21]. Hence, only God, who is the unqualifiedly Maximum and Minimum, can be the center of the world. In the next chapter Nicholas states that the world has “its center everywhere and its circumference nowhere, so to speak; for God, who is everywhere and nowhere, is its circumference and center.”

125. *DI* II, 11 (159:1-2); II, 12 (162:15-17). See n. 131 below.

126. The poles of the spheres are not fixed, physical poles because if they were there would also have to be a fixed, physical center—something whose existence Nicholas has argued to be impossible. Rather, since God is the center of the spheres and since there could not be a center without there also being poles, God is also the poles. He is pole in such way that pole is center; and He is center in such way that center is pole. See n. 124 above.

127. I.e., it would appear to the one at the pole that the center is where he is. (He is, by hypothesis, at the zenith.) That is, it would appear to him that he is at the center.

128. Nicholas is not saying that the north pole of the heavens and the point on the earth are identical. Indeed, the distances are real distances. Rather, he is observing that no *absolute* physical center exists. God is the absolute center of the world in that—qua infinite, conscious Spirit—He is equally close to, and equally distant from, all things. For this reason Nicholas calls Him Infinite Equality and regards Him not only as the center and circumference of the world but also as the center and circum-

ference of each thing within the world.

129. Rather than saying (1) that the world (i.e., the universe) has no motion and no shape or (2) that it makes no sense to ascribe to it motion and shape, Nicholas regards it as having a motion and a shape which are unknowable by finite minds.

130. *DI* II, 11 (157-159).

131. *DI* II, 11 (157:23-26; 159:1-2). *De Ludo Globi* II (84). *PNC*, p. 13. See Karsten Harries' insightful discussion in "The Infinite Sphere: Comments on the History of a Metaphor," *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 13 (January 1975), 5-15.

132. *DI* II, 11 (160:5-6).

133. *DI* II, 12 (170:7-11).

134. *Timaeus* 30B; 38E. *DI* II, 13 (176:14-17).

135. *DI* II, 12 (166:1-2).

136. *DI* II, 12 (164:11-13).

137. In the corresponding line of the Latin text (171:6) I regard "*non*" as deleted.

138. According to Nicholas there are an *indefinite* number of stars—from the point of view of the human mind. He does not, however, believe that there is an *actual infinity*, of stars (or of anything else). Note II, 1 (97:15-16); II, 11 (156:27).

139. *Wisd.* 11:21.

140. I.e., destructible.

141. *Georgica* 4.226.

142. *DI* III, 9.

143. These courses constitute the medieval *quadrivium*.

144. *Wisd.* 11:21.

145. See n. 134 above.

146. I.e., God is not at all contracted.

147. I John 1:5.

148. Deut. 4:24. Heb. 12:29.

149. Ps. 144:3 (145:3).

150. In the corresponding line of the Latin text (179:14) I am reading "*quem vult*" for "*qui vult*". In indirect discourse Nicholas sometimes uses the nominative case for the subject of a passive infinitive; but he does so erroneously. Cf. *DI* I, 1 (4:15).

151. I Tim. 6:16.

152. Matt. 7:7-8.

153. Ps. 16:15 (17:15).